VICTORIAN CHILDREN'S FANTASY:

A CRITICAL STUDY OF TWO WORKS OF FANTASY BY MRS MOLESWORTH

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Except where acknowledgement is made,

this thesis is my own work.

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INTRODUCTION

... it is almost necessary in all controversies and disputations to imitate the wisdom of the mathematician, in setting down in the very beginning the definitions of our words and terms, that others may know how we accept and understand them, and whether they concur with us or no. For it cometh to pass, for want of this, that we are sure to end where we ought to have begun, which is in questions and differences about words.

Sir Francis Bacon, Of the Advancement of Learning

The process of defining one's terms can be continued ad infinitum et ad nauseam. Why draw the line at defining "problem" and "theorem"? Why not also define "definition"?

D.B. Eperson, 'Lewis Carroll — Mathematician'

'The last great writer of fantasy in the nineteenth century was Mrs Mary Louisa Molesworth'.[1] I have chosen for study two of her works of fantasy for children: The Cuckoo Clock and 'The Story of Sunny'. Although they are, in my opinion, the best examples of the two different kinds of works of fantasy which she produced, nowhere, to my knowledge, have they received the detailed critical analysis which I feel they deserve, and which, in this thesis, I intend to give them.

After stating, in this introduction, my general approach to children's literature and how it should be studied, and my attitude to the vexed question of 'fantasy', I will proceed to an extended analysis of The Cuckoo Clock, followed by a briefer analysis of 'The Story of Sunny', as befits their respective lengths. A brief preview of my approaches to the specific texts will be found at the conclusion to this introduction.

I. CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

a. Definition; Critical Tools Required to Discuss It

Children's literature may be defined as those works of literary fiction which ostensibly entertain rather than directly instruct, and which have been written for an especial intended audience of children. This definition automatically excludes a good deal of the material to which children may have access and which they may read: text books; such works as Robinson Crusoe which were not originally meant for children but which (or versions of which) have come to be considered exclusively their province; and all works which are not ostensibly

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1. Ellis, Alec, How to Find Out About Children's Literature (1966), Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1973, p. 121. Mrs Molesworth wrote novels with a conventional love-interest, ghost stories for adults, and diverse work for children, ranging from a French lesson-book in epistolatory form to works almost in one syllable for the very young.

aimed at children. Children's literature does not inevitably depict child characters.

In discussing children's literature there is a common assumption with which I disagree, that

> There is an inherent difficulty in attempting a critical appraisal of a book written for children and it is precisely the same challenge which faces the children's author: What appeals to the adult sensibility does not, necessarily, have the same attraction for the child.[1]

Regardless of what appeals to 'the child', it seems to me that works written for children do not differ in kind from those written for adults: they seem to employ similar techniques and devices. As Ned Hedges points out, good works for children are marked, not by 'the skilled use of features that differentiate children's literature from adult literature, but [by] the skilled use of those conventions common to general literary tradition'.[2] So it would seem that any discriminating reader — child or adult — can appreciate a work written for children, if it is of merit. As A.A. Milne remarked,

> Is it a children's book? Well, what do we mean by that? Is The Wind in the Willows a children's book? Is Alice in Wonderland? Is Treasure Island? These are masterpieces, which we read with pleasure as children, but with how much more pleasure when we are grown-up

— that is, by implication, more discriminating than before.[3]

W.H. Auden is quoted as saying that 'there are no good books which are only for children',[4] and C.S. Lewis said that he was

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1. Stoate, Graham, 'The Unconscious Teaching of the Country — a re-reading of "Bevis: the story of a boy"', Children's Literature in Education, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1977, pp. 30-31.

2. Hedges, Ned Samuel, The Fable and the Fabulous: the Use of Traditional Forms in Children's Literature, University of Nebraska Ph.D. thesis, 1968, p. 24. Hedges points out the differences between children's and adult literature (pp. 11-17), but finds these to be relatively unimportant.

3. Milne, A.A., quoted in 'A Note from the Publisher', Once on a Time (1917), Puffin, Harmondsworth, 1968, p. 6.

4. Kutty, K. Narayan, 'Nonsense and Reality', Children's Literature, Vol. 5, 1976, p. 286.

> inclined to set it up as a canon that a children's story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children's story. The good ones last

— presumably through the life of an adult reader.[1] All these writers implicitly make what seems to me the mistake of equating adulthood with discrimination, but the main point is clear: if a work written for children is good, then any discriminating reader may enjoy it.

As a result of assuming that children's literature is somehow different in kind from adult literature merely on account of the age of its audience, there has been a persistent reluctance to admit openly that works of children's literature belong to traditional 'adult' genres, even when critics recognise this fact. For instance, even Kathleen Tillotson, in her seminal Novels of the Eighteen-Forties, while stating that various works 'intended primarily for the young' 'belong rightfully to the history of the novel', carefully calls these works 'tales' and 'semi-developed novels' rather than novels.[6] People who write about children's literature tend to take refuge in words like 'books' or 'stories'.

The twin assumptions that only children can properly appreciate works written for them, and that these works are somehow different in kind from works directed at adults, imply that presumably only children can adequately discuss children's literature with authority, or that the critical tools required to discuss children's literature should differ radically from those used in discussing other works. Since I disagree with both assumptions, I will use the same range of critical tools as are used in a serious discussion of any literary works of merit.

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1. Lewis, C.S., 'On Three Ways of Writing for Children' (1952), in Only Connect: readings on children's literature, ed. Sheila Egoff et.al., O.U.P., Toronto etc., 1969, p. 210.

2. Tillotson, Kathleen, Novels of the Eighteen-Forties, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1954, pp. 5, 6, 136, 137.

In using these tools, I have proceeded from two major premises about the works I will examine: that, in order fully to critically appreciate them, it is necessary to know something about the larger context and history of children's literature, and something about the nature of the original readership of these works.

b. The Context of a Work

If special attention is not paid to the context of particular works, one may fall into certain traps.

For instance, in his study of E. Nesbit, Dennis Armstrong deliberately discounts the context of other, very minor children's literature of the period. As a result, he makes such a sweeping and misleading statement as

> The influence of the Alice books upon Nesbit is real — references to and echoes of them are dotted throughout her writings — but it is parenthetical. Nesbit's basic narrative is not structured by dream logic, with its slippery transitions and transformations, its closure in waking.[1]

It is dangerous to make generalisations about the 'basic narrative' of a writer who in fact wrote more than one kind of work of fantasy, but besides that, because Armstrong ignores the plethora of works in imitation of Alice that were published between the 1870's and the 1930's, he does not see that he has misjudged the influence of Alice on E. Nesbit's work.

A superficial reading of even a selection of Alice imitations indicates the typical plot: a dream-journey to and through a wonderland is undertaken, often by a little girl, who meets a variety of characters. These can be derived from nursery rhyme or particular folk tales, or they can be folk tale character-types such as kings

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1. Armstrong, Dennis Lee, E. Nesbit: An Entrance to The Magic City, John Hopkins University Ph.D. thesis, 1974, p. 208.

and queens which have been individualised, or particular 'invented' characters, often talking animals. Children in these imitations act often as deliverers, saving the wonderlands from threats.[1] Some Alice imitations feebly copy Carroll in their use of obvious wordplay. No less than three of E. Nesbit's short works of fantasy are patently in the line of the Alice imitation: 'The Cockatoucan' (Nine Unlikely Tales), 'Justnowland', and 'The Aunt and Amabel' (The Magic World). In the first two stories the little girl is a deliverer, and there is feeble and obvious wordplay in the use of descriptive phrases as proper nouns in the third.[2] The plot follows the usual pattern in all three.

A consideration of the background of children's literature would have saved Dennis Armstrong from his misjudgement. Hence in my analyses, I have endeavoured to keep in mind the background of Victorian and Edwardian children's literature, particularly works of fantasy, as well as other contemporary fiction.

c. The Original Readership of a Work

Though it is not necessary to be a child or to use special childish criteria to appreciate or discuss children's literature, it is surely not irrelevant to consider the readership of any work at the time of its first appearance, since presumably the intentions of the writer were in some part geared to his expectation of a readership of a particular nature. In the case of any children's literature, it must be remembered that the term 'children' is very broad. As A.A. Milne said,

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1. Among these are Merle in Maggie Browne's Wanted: A King, which Carroll himself referred to as an Alice imitation (Lewis Carroll, The Diaries of Lewis Carroll, Vol. 2, ed. Roger Lancelyn Green, Cassell, London, 1953, p. 486).

2. C.S. Lewis was avowedly influenced by E. Nesbit, and this sort of wordplay occurs in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1950, where Tumnus the faun is made to engage in it.

> In any case, what do we mean by "children"? A boy of three, a girl of six, a boy of ten, a girl of fourteen — are they all to like the same thing?[1]

Whatever the ages of the children who read the two works I will examine, it is likely that the original readership of the works probably consisted of adults as well. During the so-called golden age of children's literature during which these two works were written, many adults appear to have read work written for children.[2] This is not quite the same as saying that discriminating adults and discriminating children can enjoy children's literature of merit, but rather that, at the time, adults, discriminating or otherwise, took part in the reading, good and bad, of their children, discriminating or otherwise.

G.M. Trevelyan says:

> Children's books of which the pleasure was intended to be shared with grown-ups, was a characteristic invention of the time.[3]

He was talking of the 1850's, but the trend continued. Ann Thwaite remarks of the 1880's that

> At this time there was no rigid demarcation line between adult and children's literature. Publishers did not have special children's departments. There were no children's libraries. Reviews of children's books were not confined to separate supplements.... Everyone read Alice.... The taste of the general public accorded neatly on the whole with what was considered suitable for children ....[4]

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1. Milne, op.cit., p. 6.

2. This 'golden age' took place during roughly the last four decades of the nineteenth century, till about the Great War. See Roger Lancelyn Green, 'The Golden Age of Children's Books' (1962), in Only Connect, op.cit., pp. 1-16. See also Frank Eyre, 'Twentieth Century British Fantasy Writers' in Fantasy, Science Fiction, Science Materials, ed. M. Trask, University of New South Wales, Kensington, 1972, pp. 177-204, passim.

3. Trevelyan, G.M., English Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries, Chaucer to Queen Victoria, Longmans, Green, New York, 1942, p. 545.

4. Thwaite, Ann, Waiting for the Party: The Life of Frances Hodgson Burnett: 1849-1924, Secker and Warburg, London, 1974, p. 95.

Nancy Mann mentions George MacDonald's

> expectation of a dual audience, — both children and the parents who read to them or censored their reading material[1]

and points out that

> increasingly too, there was an adult audience with a sentimental, faddish interest in children's books and in books about children; this accounts for the enormous success of such books as Kenneth Grahame's The Golden Age

which was published just before the Edwardian period.[2] And Eric Rabkin remarks of J.M. Barrie's Edwardian Peter Pan, that

> when we realise that all the best-selling copies of the book were bought by adults and read to children by adults, we know something further

about the yearnings of the adults at the time.[3]

It is therefore probable that the works I examine were read by the parents of the intended primary audience, and were to some extent influenced by the expectation of a dual readership.

Equally important, contemporary readers were of the middle class. 'Children's literature, like the novel, was middle-class in origin and tenaciously faithful to its origins.'[4] In general, books for children were too expensive for the average labourer. The novels and short stories of Mrs Molesworth mainly depict middle-class families. Such magazines as Little Folks which published her work were for the children of gentlepeople. Though the Education Act of 1870 empowered local boards to enforce compulsory education for children aged five to fifteen, and later legislation moved towards

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1. Mann, Nancy, George MacDonald and the Tradition of Victorian Fantasy, Stanford University Ph.D. thesis, 1973, p. 101.

2. Ibid., p. 106.

3. Rabkin, Eric S., The Fantastic in Literature, Princeton U.P., Princeton, 1976, p. 76. For a nineteenth-century confirmation of this adult audience see p. 81 of this thesis.

4. Crouch, Marcus, Treasure Seekers and Borrowers: Children's Books in Britain: 1900-1960, The Library Association, London, 1962, p. 76.

the goal of universal literacy,[1] the calibre of elementary education was very low,[2] and only the upper and middle classes were able to take advantage of secondary education throughout the nineteenth century.[3] The vocabulary of the work of Mrs Molesworth implies that more than an elementary education would be required of her readers.

In 1887, Charlotte Yonge, class-conscious to a high degree, was very aware that her What Books to Lend and What to Give was an annotated booklist for the working-class parish library. Hence, including Mrs Molesworth's works of fantasy in a separate category, she included her novel Hermy under the rubric of 'Drawing-Room Stories', describing the category thus:

> The stories under this head are chosen for their unusual excellence, but they deal in general with a way of life, with pursuits, allusions and temptations, so much out of the way of the ordinary clients of the parish library that we do not recommend them for that purpose, although they would do no harm but decidedly good, so far as they were understood, and, where readers of a superior degree are included, would be excellent.[4]

She included Mrs Molesworth's The Abbey by the Sea under the rubric of 'Senior Classes', saying that it was 'perhaps too ideal, but refining'.[5] It is clear from these remarks that the work of Mrs Molesworth was thought not to be very suitable for other than middle- or upper-class children.

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1. Ellis, Alec, A History of Children's Reading and Literature (1968), Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1969, pp. 82-85.

2. Altick, Richard, The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1957, p. 166.

3. Ibid., p. 173.

4. Yonge, Charlotte, What Books to Lend and What to Give, National Society's Depository, London, n.d. (1887), p. 35.

5. Ibid., p. 23.

II. FANTASY

a. Defining 'Fantasy'

To call the literary works under consideration 'works of fantasy' implies some distinguishable element in common, an element which could characterise each work. The exact meaning of the term 'fantasy' varies greatly from critic to critic, though certain literary works — fairy tales, or *Alice*, for example — are accepted by most as being denoted by it.

I define the term 'fantasy' as denoting an element which characterises any narrative fiction in which it appears: the depiction of objects and events not physically possible; or, more particularly, the depiction in narrative fiction of the suspension of some physical law, or commonly received notion thereof, without any rational or pseudo-rational explanation. This means that I see as a 'work of fantasy' any narrative fiction in which for example dragons or giants appear, or animals talk and men fly unaided.

All narrative fictions, even the most mimetic, depict non-existent objects or events: the 'London' depicted in a 'realistic' novel, though mirroring the London of real life, is nevertheless physically non-existent, since the author has had to select and exclude, and thereby inevitably distort. So, the non-existent objects or events depicted by those narrative fictions denoted by the term 'fantasy' are those which not only do not exist but which we think cannot exist.

Literary works of scripture or myth, though they may be narrative, and depict the suspension of physical law without rational explanation, are not works of fantasy, since they are not presented as fiction. 'Fiction' implies that neither author nor reader must take the literary work as a literal account, or believe in its truth:

> To be fantasy, a work of literature must be so regarded by its authors and his contemporaries, and their judgement is final. Fantasy, in other words, is deliberate: it is intentionally fantasy.[1]

The Christian scriptural myth as given in the Bible was and is believed; it is difficult even today, to retell a narrative from the Bible without retelling it 'straight', for the Bible is not yet 'disinfected of belief'.[2] Even when people have ceased literally to believe in a particular myth — the corpus of Greek myth, for instance — the term 'fantasy' is not quite apposite. Robert Graves's account of the Greek myths is not fantasy, for the myths told 'straight' retain something of their old power to evoke literal belief. In children's literature, this is the case with Charles Kingsley's The Heroes. However, disinfected myths, not told straight, can become new works of fantasy, if they are emasculated in some way (by the use of irony, humour or various whimsical tricks). This is the case with the 'Gothicised' Greek myths of Hawthorne's Tanglewood Tales.

Of course, the notion of 'physical laws' is a particularly modern one, and it is certain that people in various earlier eras did not have the same notions of physical laws as we do, and hence, what we would consider as the depiction of the suspension of physical law might not have appeared to be so to them. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why medieval romances, for instance, are rarely called 'fantasy', even though they present objects and events which are not today considered physically possible. However, at the time at which Mrs Molesworth was writing, it may reasonably be said that the

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1. Schmerl, Rudolph, 'Fantasy as Technique', Virginia Quarterly Review, Vol. 43, No. 4, Autumn 1967, p. 646. See also Colin Manlove, Modern Fantasy: Five Studies, C.U.P., Cambridge etc., 1975, pp. 1-2; J.B. Batchelor, Fantasy in English Prose Fiction between 1890 and 1914, University of Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, 1969, p. 5.

2. Lewis, C.S., The Allegory of Love (1936), O.U.P., London etc., 1969, p. 53.

commonalty of people did not believe that dragons or giants existed, that animals talked, or that men flew unaided.

It is necessary to be as basic as this in defining 'fantasy' as the depiction of the suspension of physical law, because far more subtle and attractive definitions, which indeed embrace such works as fairy tales and Alice, tend also to embrace works which are well beyond what would normally be termed a literary work of fantasy. Some of these definitions tend imperceptibly to extend their range of application to works which would not appear to be covered by them. These are mainly those which employ the words 'supernatural' or 'impossible', or variants thereof. From the many definitions before me, I select four fairly recent ones:

> C.S.Lewis (1961): As a literary term a fantasy means any narrative that deals with impossibilities and preternaturals.[1]
>
> J.B. Batchelor (1969): Fantasy is essentially a form in which both writer and reader acknowledge the impossibility of what is described.[2]
>
> Colin Manlove (1975): A fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of the supernatural with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms....[3] [dealing with][4] supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects....
>
> W.R. Irwin (1976): ...a fantasy is a story based on and controlled by an overt violation of what is generally accepted as possibility; it is the narrative result of transforming the condition contrary to fact into "fact" itself ....[5] [Further] a narrative is a fantasy if it presents the persuasive establishment and development of an impossibility, an arbitrary construct of the mind with all under the control of logic and rhetoric.[6]

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1. Lewis, C.S., An Experiment in Criticism, C.U.P., 1961, p. 40.

2. Batchelor, op.cit., p.5.

3. Manlove, op.cit., p.1.

4. Ibid., p. 10.

5. Irwin, W.R., The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy, University of Illinois Press, Urbana etc., 1976, p. 4.

6. Ibid., p. 9.

There is a reason for not defining the literary term 'fantasy' as a narrative fiction in which a characterising element is the depiction of supernatural or impossible objects or events. 'Supernatural' or 'preternatural', with their connotations of 'religion', 'miracle', or 'ghosts', do not seem to be adequate words; one would not call the objects or events depicted in fairy tales or Alice 'supernatural'.

'Impossible', which seems perfect, turns out to be too Protean and wide-ranging a word; its meaning tends to range from 'physically possible' to 'extremely improbable' to 'completely "other"', meanings which are not universally acceptable. Thus, in his thesis, J.B. Batchelor begins by giving the definition quoted above, but 250 pages later shifts his ground in saying,

> Fantasy in the sense in which it is used in this study; a fiction in which it is accepted, by both writer and reader, that the subject is an extreme and self-evident violation of probability.[1]

Hence, we find him accepting The Way of All Flesh as a 'fantasy', 'the fantasy of a large legacy bringing with it independence and the status of a gentleman'.[2] The inheritance of a large legacy is certainly improbable, but just as certainly, not impossible. Because 'impossible' is such a chameleon word, J.B. Batchelor can include such works as Hadrian VII or The Dolly Dialogues in his study,[3] works which are admittedly 'unrealistic' and improbable, but which do not depict impossibilities, and which are not generally called 'fantasy'.

In the same way, Colin Manlove extends his phrase 'supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects' to such works as Mervyn Peake's Gormenghast trilogy, in which he admits that 'Nothing

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1. Batchelor, op.cit., p. 253, n. 154.

2. Ibid., p. 327.

3. Ibid., pp. 256, 357.

"supernatural" or "magical" by our standards is in fact present', but justifying the inclusion of the work in his study on the grounds that 'the existence of the realm itself is impossible or wholly "other" in relation to ours ... the situation is one of two separate natures.'[1] I would argue, however, that the fact that we can 'understand' what is going on in the world of Gormenghast, and see also that nothing occurs there which would be physically impossible in our world, means that Gormenghast is not different in kind from Earth, and that the trilogy is not a fantasy either by Colin Manlove's definition or by mine.

W.R. Irwin too extends his use of the word 'impossible' beyond physical impossibilities. As a result he can call A High Wind in Jamaica 'fantasy', since, though it 'is not in itself beyond conceiving', 'the fantasy in this work results from the violation ... of a standard belief about the nature of innocence'.[2] A High Wind in Jamaica seems rather to demonstrate than to violate one standard belief in the nature of innocence, the Augustinian one that after the Fall, innocence does not exist, even in children. In the same way Irwin can consider Lord of the Flies in his book,[3] though neither A High Wind in Jamaica nor Lord of the Flies is generally called 'fantasy'.[4]

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1. Manlove, op.cit., p. 3.

2. Irwin, op.cit., p. 34.

3. Ibid., p. 183.

4. Though Irwin can include Lord of the Flies and A High Wind in Jamaica within his purview of literary works of fantasy, because he stresses the 'persuasive establishment and development of an impossibility' he excludes such works as Maeterlinck's Pelleas and Melisande, Eleanor Farjeon's The Fair of St. James and Peter Beagle's The Last Unicorn, since in these, he says, the author's purpose is to 'incite the reader's participation in wonder, in which disbelief contributes to a drifting pleasure detached from any kind of intellection' (p. 9).
I would argue that no literary work of fiction, no matter how persuasive, replaces disbelief by belief, and that the suspension of disbelief is different in kind from the establishment of belief. Hence, the works by Maeterlinck, Farjeon and Beagle, though they do not seek to establish 'verisimilitude', are not different in kind from the other literary works of fantasy that Irwin does admit to be 'fantasy'.

The various ways in which Batchelor, Manlove and Irwin can stretch the notion of 'impossibility' seems to indicate how subjectively it can be used, and the danger in using it.

Of course, people who are neither scientists nor philosophers can talk about 'physical law' or 'the possible' in only the most general sense and such general talk about either must stem from an unexamined idea of 'reality' and be therefore naturally suspect. It may very well be true to say, as Jacques Ehrmann does in another context, that

> All reality is caught up in the play of the concepts which designate it. Reality is thus not capable of being objectified, nor subjectified.[1]

Nevertheless, in literary analysis of the sort I am undertaking, I do not think we can do without this axiomatic idea of 'reality', and the notion of the 'physical laws' of the 'real world', against which works of fantasy may be measured. I chose as my yardstick the phrase 'physical law' rather than 'the possible', only because the former seemed to admit of less latitude in its use than the latter.

Indeed, when critics who talk about fantasy try to do without some yardstick such as I have mentioned, the resulting definition is subject to the same sort of elasticity as those I cited above. Eric Rabkin, for instance, says that 'the fantastic is a special quality that we have seen as the defining quality of the genre of fantasy',[2] the fantastic being the 'direct reversal of the ground rules of a narrative world',[3] these ground rules being determined by such signals as a message from the author, the astonishment of the characters, or the statement of the narrator.[4] This may seem very attractive, but

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1. Ehrmann, Jacques, 'Homo Ludens revisited', Yale French Studies, No. 41, 1968, p. 56.

2. Rabkin, op.cit., p. 189.

3. Ibid., p. 213.

4. Ibid., pp. 17-18.

for Eric Rabkin, works which are characterised by the 'fantastic' quality include detective fiction, and this takes one even further afield than the critics I mentioned above.

Since J.R.R. Tolkien's essay 'On Fairy-Stories' is so very widely read and quoted, I should emphasise here that his use of the term 'fantasy' is also too broad for my purposes, denoting as it does both an imaginative capacity and a characterising element in a literary work. For him, 'fantasy' is a word which

> embrace[s] both the Sub-creative Art in itself and a quality of strangeness and wonder in the Expression .... [and] freedom from the domination of observed "fact".[1]

I should also emphasise that Tolkien's account of the 'Sub-creation' of a 'Secondary World' with its own laws, capable of inspiring 'literary' or 'Secondary Belief'[2] may lead one into thinking that the characterising element of a work of fantasy is the depiction in a narrative fiction of a 'Secondary World', an 'Other World' as he also terms it, i.e. a setting obviously different from the real world of the author and his readers.[3] In my terms, the characterising element

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1. Tolkien, J.R.R., 'On Fairy-Stories' (1938), in Tree and Leaf, Unwin Books, London, 1964, p. 44. See also p. 40: 'Fantasy, the making or glimpsing of Other-worlds'.

2. Ibid., pp. 25, 36-37.

3. It is evident that Secondary Worlds cannot be mimetic depictions of settings in the real world, for implicit in Tolkien's essay is the assumption that not all the settings of narrative fiction are Secondary Worlds. Significantly, he sees the settings of 'fairy-stories' (citing many folk tales as examples) as 'the realm of Faerie' (p. 15). He includes no examples of 'fairy-stories' which are narrative fictions depicting settings which are avowedly in the real world. Indeed, he excludes 'traveller's tales' like Gulliver's Travels from the category of 'fairy-story' precisely because they report 'marvels to be seen in the mortal world in some region of our own time and space' (p. 66). On various grounds, he also excludes Alice, The Wind in the Willows, and Barrie's Mary Rose, all of which depict at least for a part of the narrative a setting which is avowedly in the real world (pp. 19, 20, 64, 68). Though he considers the Gospels 'fairy-stories' (pp. 62-63), the Gospels are not narrative fictions.

of a work of fantasy is not necessarily the sub-creation of a Tolkienian Secondary World which is obviously different from our own, since such a Tolkienian Secondary World need not suspend a physical law of the real world.[1] Generally, however, sub-created Secondary Worlds in narrative fiction do indeed involve the suspension of our notions of physical law in the real world, and are indeed works of fantasy by my definition.

There are a number of ways in which the word 'fantasy' is used, which I shall avoid.

The literary term 'fantasy' must be distinguished from the psychologists' term 'fantasy', to which it is related etymologically, and which I shall spell 'phantasy' to prevent confusion. Phantasy may be defined as that free-flowing mental activity, usually spontaneous, not directed to the immediate solution of any problem, which involves the imagining of any present or absent, existent or non-existent object or event in concrete symbols or images. The term may also denote the symbols or images themselves. When conscious and voluntary the activity may be 'musing', 'reverie' or the more organised 'daydream'; when unconscious and involuntary it may be the 'night-dream' of sleep; when conscious and involuntary it may be the 'hallucination' or 'delusion'. Conscious and voluntary phantasy may find behavioural expression in imaginative play of the sort commonly known as 'make-believe', which may include the attribution of qualities to an object which it does not normally possess, or 'role behaviour outside its

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1. Gormenghast is obviously a sub-created Secondary World in Tolkien's terms, with a new landscape, rich and strange, new customs, new patterns of incident; Tolkien's own Middle-Earth is too, with a new language in addition to the other elements; while E. Nesbit's 'London' in The Phoenix and the Carpet is as obviously not. Yet, in my terms, Titus Groan is not a work of fantasy, while The Lord of the Rings and The Phoenix and the Carpet are. Novelty and strangeness alone, whether of setting or any other element, are not sufficient to characterise a work of fantasy.

socially functional context'. Phantasy and play are certainly related activities.[1] The mental activity of phantasy may compensate the individual for the deficiencies of his own life, serving as 'wish-fulfilment', or it may not. All literature has been said to stem from the phantasy of the writer. Whether or not such is the case, there need be no more special connection between the writer's phantasy and his works of fantasy, than there is between his phantasy and those of his works which are not of fantasy. Literary works may depict the phantasy of the characters, or they may not. It seems important to draw these distinctions before discussing the two works under examination, since one in fact does depict the phantasy of a certain character.

Though the above is only a layman's account of a very complex psychological phenomenon,[2] it serves to protect one from the confusion engendered by such passages as this:

> ... fantasy can take many forms. Mere daydreaming is a form of it, as is the dreaming we do in sleep. Nursery rhymes are also fantasy. Fairy tales of the sort told by Hans Christian Andersen and the Brothers Grimm are fantasy, as is science fiction, and what might be called "pure fantasy" — the works, for instance, of Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams. Much of fantasy literature is usually considered children's literature....[3]

Passages of this kind, in which a mental activity and a literary work are lumped together, are legion.

Again, I use 'fantasy' only as a descriptive term, not qualitatively, as is often the case, to indicate any special merit in

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1. See Eric Klinger, Structure and Functions of Fantasy, Wiley Interscience, New York, 1971, pp. 13, 17-48; and Gregory Bateson, 'A Theory of Play and Fantasy', Steps to an Ecology of Mind, Ballantine, New York, 1972, pp. 177-193.

2. As Klinger says, 'There is no set of generally accepted criteria for discerning the boundaries of fantasy' (Klinger, op.cit., p. 6).

3. Leeming, David Adams, ed., Flights: Readings in Magic, Mysticism, Fantasy and Myth, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovitch Inc, New York, 1974, editorial note, p. 259.

a particular work.[1] Also, though the words 'fantasy' and 'fancy' are etymologically related, I do not automatically assume, as Sir Herbert Read did, that literary works denoted by the term 'fantasy' are necessarily synonymous with or the products of that imaginative capacity called 'fancy', particularly as Coleridge defined it.[2] Inferior works of fantasy may indeed be the products of Coleridgean fancy, in his terms the mode of memory emancipated from time and space, modified by choice, with no other counters but fixities and definites to play with: associative, mechanical and non-vital. Equally, superior works of fantasy may indeed be the products of Coleridgean Secondary Imagination, that perceptive, idealising mental capacity which blends and unifies.

Finally, since the adjective 'fantastic', again etymologically related to 'fantasy', has developed so many meanings of its own (among them 'wonderful', 'strange', 'odd', 'quaint', 'unreal' and 'grotesque') and is used in so many special ways by critics such as those mentioned above, it is safer not to use it as an adjective implying any connection with 'fantasy' as a literary term, which must serve as both noun and adjective.

b. 'Fantasy' and Genre

Though I said that I will examine 'two works of fantasy', I did not imply that I consider that literary works of fantasy comprise a

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1. See for example Lillian Smith, The Unreluctant Years: A Critical Approach to Children's Literature, American Library Association, Chicago, 1953, p. 150: 'the merely invented or manufactured story which their authors mistake for genuine fantasy'.

2. Read, Herbert, English Prose Style (1928), G. Bell, London, 1937, p. 137. For a good summary account of 'fancy/fantasy' as an imaginative capacity rather than mental activity, see Joyce Rose Hines, Getting Home: A Study of Fantasy and the Spiritual Journey in the Christian Supernatural Novels of Charles Williams and George MacDonald, City University of New York Ph.D. thesis, 1972, pp. 23-25.

genre of 'fantasy'. Narrative fictions are traditionally categorised into such 'genres' or 'kinds' as the epic, the romance, the novel, the short story, and so on, on the grounds of various characterising elements of form (length, use of metre etc.,) and content (nature of typical subject matter, method of characterisation etc.) which they have in common. The precise criteria for identifying a genre have yet to be established. Nevertheless, it is helpful to consider Graham Hough's account of the process by which we determine literary kinds:

> ... it is rarely possible to find a single element common to all examples of a kind. Tragedy and the novel offer notorious examples of the failure of this sort of definition. Instead we find groups where A has certain kinships with B and C, B and C have other kinships with D, while D is linked in yet other respects with A; and so on. Literary kinds are probably best understood by Wittgenstein's notion of "family resemblances"....[1]

An individual work rarely displays all the characterising elements of the genre to which it belongs. The absence of one characterising element does not remove it from a genre, but conversely, it is doubtful whether a genre can be defined by selecting only one characterising element and then attempting to relate all other elements to it. Hence in the light of my definition of 'fantasy' it is clear that 'fantasy' does not denote a genre. Rather, it appears to me that works of fantasy properly belong with other narrative fictions (which may or may not be works of fantasy) in whatever genre which is thought to have most of their other characterising elements of form and content.[2]

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1. Hough, Graham, An Essay on Criticism, Gerald Duckworth, London, 1966, p. 86.

2. Such statements as this tend to lead one to think that in children's literature, works of fantasy do comprise a separate genre: 'The major genre (perhaps nonsense verse is just as major) whose development is largely the work of children's literature is fantasy ... the form seems ... peculiarly suited to children; and children seem peculiarly suited to the form' (Clifton Fadiman, 'The Case for a Children's Literature', Children's Literature, Vol. 5, 1976, p. 14).

It must be pointed out that 'fantasy', the depiction of the suspension of physical law, may be one of the characterising elements of a particular genre — as in the case of the epic or romance. The point is that there are literary works of fantasy in the genres of narrative fiction such as the novel, genres which do not have fantasy as one of their characterising elements, and that these literary works should not be lumped with literary works in other genres.

Having said that works of fantasy belong to traditional genres of narrative fiction, I would like to say a few words about certain sorts of narrative fictions akin to, but not identical with, works of fantasy, before attempting to define clearly the fantasy novel and the Kunstmärchen, the genres to which belong the two works of fantasy which I will examine.

Narrative fictions of the sort known as 'science-fiction', though akin to works of fantasy, are not works of fantasy. Part of my definition of the term 'fantasy' was that no rational or pseudo-rational explanation of the depicted suspension of physical law should be vouchsafed. Two definitions of science-fiction run:

> ... prose narrative treating of a situation that could not arise in the world we know, but which is hypothesised on the basis of some innovation in science and technology;[1]

and, a work in which the

> narrative world is at least somewhat different from our own, and ... that difference is apparent against the background of an organised body of knowledge.[2]

In works of science-fiction the writer factitiously attempts or appears to attempt to account for the suspension of physical law in a reasonable manner.

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1. Amis, Kingsley, New Maps of Hell: A Survey of Science Fiction, Harcourt, Brace and Co, New York, 1960, p. 18.

2. Rabkin, op.cit., p. 119.

This should be stressed, for in works of fantasy, no explanation is given, except perhaps in terms of magic, that numinous force not comprehensible by human reason. Here I should stress that 'dream', when 'used' in works of fantasy, does not serve as a rational explanation of the suspension of physical law, but rather as a convenient use of literary convention to get the protagonists to begin to experience fantasy objects and events.[1] Notice how rarely, if ever, in works of fantasy for children, the author explicitly demarcates between where the consciousness of the protagonist leaves off and where the rationally explicable dream suspension of physical law begins. When Alice goes down the rabbit hole, for example, this is a direct depiction of the suspension of physical law; there is no dream explanation to begin with. In these cases, the dream convention may not even be properly called a framework, for it rarely, if ever, 'goes round', as it were, all 'sides' of the depicted suspension. There is no 'he slept ... he dreamed and saw and experienced ... he awoke'. Rather there is 'he saw and experienced ... he awoke'. Whereas every work of science fiction needs a new rational or pseudo-rational explanation, with each particular explanation not following a conventional pattern, the use of dream convention remains standard. In many Alice imitations (for example, Tom Hood's From Nowhere to the North Pole, 1875) the suspension of physical law begins in the abrupt manner of Alice, but the expected realisation that he has been dreaming does not occur to the protagonist, nor is it made unequivocally clear to the reader. The dream convention is submerged, so to speak. Thus

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1. Tolkien excluded from his category of 'fairy-stories' 'any story that uses the machinery of Dream' but did not seem to be quite sure of himself, since he immediately qualified his statement thus: 'At the least, even if the reported dream is in other respects in itself a fairy-story, I would condemn the whole as gravely defective: like a good picture in a disfiguring frame' (Tolkien, op.cit., p. 19; see also p. 64).

the use of 'dream' is not to be thought equivalent to the pseudo-rational 'scientific' explanation of the suspension of physical law in science-fiction.

Narrative fictions which depict a narrative world similar to the real world, but in which history has taken a different course to that which it has actually taken, are not works of fantasy, unless they also depict the suspension of physical law. Some of Joan Aiken's books depict members of the Stuart line on the English throne in the nineteenth century, something logically but not physically impossible. They do not depict the suspension of physical law, so they are not works of fantasy, but very akin to them.

Narrative fictions which depict 'Utopias' and 'dystopias' need not necessarily be works of fantasy. Thus, Gulliver's Travels is a work of fantasy while 1984 is not. Similarly, 'Gothic novels' or 'Gothic romances' are not necessarily works of fantasy. Thus, The Castle of Otranto is a work of fantasy, while The Mysteries of Udolpho is not.

I try now to define the novel, in which fantasy is not a characterising element, and the Kunstmärchen, in which it is.

Novels are not conventionally thought of as being works of fantasy. A working definition of the novel might be: A prose narrative fiction of some length in which the human characters are depicted in greater or less psychological complexity, with some attempt to render them individual, not stylised or typical, thereby rendering them 'realistic'. These characters are generally presented as acting in a manner consonant with human experience, contributing to events and patterns of incident not totally improbable or different from those occurring in real life, against a detailed setting not significantly different from that in which the reader lives, moves, and has his being. 'Realism' may be said to be the attempt to mirror, as faithfully as

is possible in a work of art, the inner and outer lives of individual people imagined by the author. These people are part of and influenced by events and incidents in a depiction of the real world as the author and his readers see it. The novel creates realism by, inter alia, its use of clock and calendar time, and denotative prose. In relation to setting, appearance, and so on, much of what Gilbert's Pooh-Bah called 'merely corroborative detail, intended to give artistic verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative' is vouchsafed.

Realism of character (including dialogue), event and setting (both temporal and physical), became a characterising element of the novel in its early stages because it was being defined in counter-distinction to the romance, particularly the Gothic romance.[1] However, the novel has tended to move in a particular direction. As Virginia Woolf said,

> it is to express character — not to preach doctrines, sing songs, or celebrate the glories of the British Empire that the form of the novel, so clumsy, verbose, and undramatic, so rich, so elastic, and alive, has been evolved.[2]

She is pointing to the fact that the focus of the novel has tended to be the realistic depiction and psychological exploration of character in particular.

Hence, when a prose narrative of some length, depicting realistic characters, depicts also the suspension of some physical law, it seems to me to remain a novel, even though it also becomes a work of fantasy.

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1. In such works as Clara Reeve's The Progress of Romance (1785). For the classic nineteenth century distinction between the novel and the romance in terms of realism (though the word is not used), see Nathaniel Hawthorne's famous 'Introduction' to The House of the Seven Gables (1851).

2. Woolf, Virginia, 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' (1924), quoted in Miriam Allott, ed., Novelists on the Novel, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1959, p. 290.

Such a novel may be called a fantasy novel, evolving out of the conventional novel, part of a special class within the genre. At the outer edge of the fantasy novels are those in which, in addition to realistic characters, there are non-realistic characters as well, and setting is obviously different from the real world — for example, Alice. Sometimes, even the realism of human character is so perfunctorily presented that it is apparent only by contrast with the less than realistic presentation of non-human characters and setting. It is far easier to see that less extreme examples, such as E. Nesbit's Five Children and It, are much more obviously novels. In the latter, there are five realistic main characters as opposed to one in Alice, one non-realistic, fantasy character as opposed to many in Alice, and though the work depicts the suspension of physical law in the events, the setting is not obviously different from the real world. Yet Alice and Five Children and It, works of fantasy both, are both novels nonetheless, for they are prose narratives of some length realistically depicting human characters in some of their psychological complexity, as individual, not stylised or typical.[1]

'Märchen' is the German word meaning 'traditional folk fairy tale'. (Examples of these, of course, need not necessarily include fairies.) The 'Kunstmärchen' (literally, 'Art-folktale'), first came into being during the Romantic period in Germany as a reaction against the Enlightenment, and was used by Goethe, Tieck, Novalis, E.T.A. Hoffman, de la Motte Fouque, etc. The German word is often used

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1. The fantasy short story may be considered on almost exactly the same terms as the fantasy novel, since the short story is 'Narrative prose fiction shorter than the novel, usually not more than 15,000 words. It is impossible to distinguish a short story from a novel on any single basis other than length, and there is no established length to either' (Sylvan Barnet et.al., ed., A Dictionary of Literary Terms, Constable, London, 1964, p. 130). However, like the short story in relation to the novel, the fantasy short story tends to be less complex than the fantasy novel.

generally, to designate all original works of fantasy. However, I would like to limit its application.[1] My working definition of the Kunstmärchen is: An original narrative fiction, usually in prose (like the Märchen),[2] varying in length, though often short (like the Märchen), in which the main characters are depicted non-realistically, in such roles as prince, princess, third son and so on, obviously reminiscent of the typical figures of the Märchen. As in the Märchen, the main characters are rarely children,[3] and they often have romantic or unusual names. The action often incorporates such plot motifs derived from the Märchen as the rule of three, and almost inevitably includes the suspension of physical law.[4] Hence, such fantasy events as the delivering of magical christening curses and such fantasy beings as ogres and fairy godmothers are depicted. The setting, both temporal and physical, is generally not presented realistically but as 'once upon a time, long ago and far away'.

Lorna Sage says of 'parody':

> Although it is quite often deflationary and comic, its distinguishing characteristic is not deflation, but

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1. One scholar makes the sort of distinction I make between the stylised Kunstmärchen and realistic fantasy novel in talking of the comparatively realistic works of Tieck. She says that in the case of his work 'The fairy tale (Kunstmärchen) approaches the Novelle' (Marianne Thalmann, The Romantic Fairy Tale: Seeds of Surrealism, tr. Mary B. Corcoran, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1964, p. 56). E.T.A. Hoffman himself called many of his works of fantasy 'Fantasiestücke' rather than Kunstmärchen.

2. There are verse Kunstmärchen in English: some Elizabethan narrative 'fairy poetry', or Jane Barlow's Victorian The End of Elfintown. These are obviously not fantasy narrative poems as, say, Christabel or Goblin Market would be.

3. See Max Luthi, Once Upon a Time: The Nature and Meaning of Fairy Tales, tr. Lee Chadeayne and Paul Gottwald, Frederick Ungar, New York, 1970, p. 50.

4. All Märchen are not works of fantasy, e.g. Grimms' German 'The Master Thief' is a folk narrative fiction in which no physical law is suspended. Most Märchen, however, are works of fantasy. They include local legends, saint's tales, and so on.

> analytic mimicry. The systematic appropriation of the form and imagery of secular love poetry by the sacred lyric is an example of parody in this basic sense.[1]

In this 'basic sense' the Kunstmärchen is parody too, for it imitates or mimics the Märchen, deriving or drawing from it, to some extent, form, typical characters, and plot motifs and characteristics, including fantasy. The Kunstmärchen, in being modern, might differ from the Märchen in treatment and tone: some attempt at comparatively elaborate character motivation may correspond to an extremely simple equivalent, extravagance and lush description may replace stark simplicity and economy of plot or setting, mockery and sophistication may take the place of high seriousness and naïveté, moral absolutes may not be as sharply distinct, and the ending may be negative or unresolved. Nevertheless, the two genres are related genres of non-realistic narrative fiction, one evolving out of the other, and they both generally depict the suspension of physical law.

The fantasy novel, like the novel generally, may be said to hold up a mirror to life, despite the 'fantasy' in it. The Kunstmärchen, as 'parody', is a mirror of a mirror, taking as its starting point not real life but the conventionalised art form of the Märchen which has already expressed its view of life in a highly non-realistic, stylised way. Oscar Wilde said of his short works of fantasy, which stand midway between the Kunstmärchen and the fantasy short story, that the form in which they were cast was 'a reaction against the purely imitative character of modern art',[2] and this may be said of the Kunstmärchen genre as a whole.

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1. Sage, Lorna in, ed Roger Fowler, A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1973, p. 137.

2. Wilde, Oscar, The Letters of Oscar Wilde, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis, Rupert Hart-Davis, London, 1962, p. 221.

The unsophisticated 'folk' mind which created the Märchen presumably had a naïve attitude towards the fantasy Märchen world.[1] However, this attitude, if ever it existed, has long since receded, even as Märchen continue to be told, written down, and rewritten. Hence, the Märchen can be seen as formally pleasing rather than mimetic. The Kunstmärchen, deriving from the Märchen, is also formally pleasing rather than mimetic, and more self-consciously so than the Märchen. It depends on previous narrative fiction, perhaps even on written rather than oral versions of Märchen, for its raw material, in a way that the fantasy novel does not. Hence, when reading a fantasy novel, a knowledge of many novelistic conventions, though of course very useful, is not essential; whereas a knowledge of Märchen and Märchen conventions and motifs is inevitably expected in any reading of Kunstmärchen.

It appears to me that the English Kunstmärchen for children may be roughly divided into three types — the serious, heavily symbolic or allegorical Kunstmärchen such as Mrs Craik's The Little Lame Prince (1875), which announces that it has an inner meaning; the non-allegorical, often romantic Kunstmärchen such as those in Frances Browne's Granny's Wonderful Chair (1857); and the amusing burlesque Kunstmärchen such as Thackeray's The Rose and the Ring (1855). Individual works may of course overlap these types: the opening of George MacDonald's 'Little Daylight' (1871) is burlesque, the main plot is romantic, and there is an overall impression of an intended symbolic meaning.

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1. Perhaps the very fact that the unsophisticated 'folk' mind tells the Märchen as a narrative, perhaps even as narrative fiction, indicates that the teller no longer sees the fantasy world of the Märchen as the same as the world around him, but as existing in contrast to it. The teller is looking back, to once upon a time, when things were no longer as they are.

Jonathan Culler says that

> Comedy exists by virtue of the fact that to read something as a comedy involves different expectations from reading something as a tragedy or as an epic.[1]

In the same way it may be said that to read something as a Kunstmärchen involves different expectations from reading something as a fantasy novel or short story. When the distinction between the fantasy novel or short story and the Kunstmärchen is lost sight of, certain literary effects get out of focus. For example, Dennis Armstrong rightly comments on how E. Nesbit's female and male characters resolve 'their tasks with equal bravery and wit', referring to the burlesque Kunstmärchen 'Belinda and Bellamant' and the fantasy novel The Magic City.[2] But he does not make the distinction between the two genres. As a result, he nowhere comments that in the fantasy novel E. Nesbit is taking a stand on an issue, whereas in the burlesque Kunstmärchen she is, first and foremost, inverting a Märchen motif. The presentation of Lucy in The Magic City is part of a central statement about the relative capabilities of girls and boys, whereas the presentation of Belinda, having to seek her fortune like any prince, is yet another comic variation of an element in the particular Märchen 'The Sleeping Beauty' (the passivity of the protagonist), upon which this and many other Kunstmärchen are based, and only incidentally a statement about male and female.

One of the obstacles which has historically hindered an awareness of the differences between the Märchen, the Kunstmärchen and the fantasy novel or short story, is the ubiquitous term 'fairy tale'

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1. Culler, Jonathan, Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1975, p. 137.

2. Armstrong, op.cit., p. 116.

and its variant 'fairy story'.[1] These primarily refer to the Märchen, but have been used as if they are capable of indefinite extension.

The nineteenth century, looking for some way of distinguishing between the three genres, sometimes sought for new phrases which would denote original works of fantasy, hence sometimes tending to group Kunstmärchen and fantasy novels together. So we find W.C. Roscoe (1855) speaking of 'purely imaginative tales' with respect to both Gulliver's Travels (fantasy novel) and Ruskin's The King of the Golden River (Kunstmärchen);[2] and an anonymous art critic (1883) referring to Hans Andersen's 'fancies' (Kunstmärchen and fantasy short stories);[3] A.I. Shand (1896) talking about Lewis Carroll's 'fairy fancies' (fantasy novels);[4] and R.E.D. Sketchley (1902) calling both Alice Corkran's Down the Snow Stairs (fantasy novel, and Alice imitation) and Prince Prigio (Kunstmärchen) 'modern inventions'.[5]

On the other hand, there also seemed to be an intuitive awareness on the part of some nineteenth century critics that Kunstmärchen and fantasy novels were not identical. The same art critic whom I mentioned above also refers to the fantasy novels Through the Looking-Glass,

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1. Tolkien used 'fairy story' to include Märchen and some works of original fantasy; and Roger Lancelyn Green uses it to mean 'Kunstmärchen' when he says that '... a little over a hundred years ago several writers in England decided that there were enough translations and retellings of the fairy-tales of Perrault and Grimm, and began inventing stories of their own: fairy-stories, which are not quite the same as fairy-tales' ('Introduction' to Modern Fairy Stories, Dent, London, 1955, p. xii).

2. Roscoe, William Caldwell, 'Fictions for Children' (1855), in A Peculiar Gift: Nineteenth Century Writings on Books for Children, ed. Lance Salway, Kestrel, Harmondsworth, 1976, p. 40. The anthology is hereafter cited as A.P.G.

3. Anon., 'Art in the Nursery' (1883), in A.P.G., op.cit., p. 250.

4. Shand, Alexander Innes, 'Children Yesterday and Today' (1896), in A.P.G., op.cit., p. 90.

5. Sketchley, R.E.D., 'Some Children's Books Illustrators' (1902), in A.P.G., op.cit., p. 264.

The Water Babies and Alice as 'novel splendours'.[1] And in 1887, in her What Books to Lend, Charlotte Yonge, even while locating both genres under the rubric of Fairy Tales, distinguishes between 'fairy tales that are absolute classics', referring to 'Cinderella' and 'Beauty and the Beast' — that is Märchen — and what she calls 'imaginative classics'.[2] And she characterises these 'imaginative classics' — that is original works of fantasy — in a way that would indicate that she felt that Kunstmärchen and fantasy novels were different in kind. She comments that Mrs Craik's collection of Märchen are 'genuine old fairy tales' and that with Grimms's Märchen they 'make up the real folk-lore tales'.[3] And here are her comments on some Kunstmärchen:

> 579. The Hope of the Katzekopfs. By the Rev. F. Paget ....
> Deserves to be classical for its fun and its moral.
>
> 580. Old-fashioned Fairy Tales. By Mrs Ewing ....
> Modern, but according to the ancient rule of fairy tales.
>
> 586. The Light Princess. By G. MacDonald ....
> Worthy to be old fairy tales.[4]

Here, in contrast, are her comments on some fantasy novels:

> 582. Alice in Wonderland. By Lewis Carroll ....
>
> 583. Through the Looking-Glass. By Lewis Carroll ....
> It takes some cultivation to be able to enjoy these wondrously droll compositions.
>
> 584. The Water Babies. By C. Kingsley.
> The same may be said of this. These are literature, though we are not sure whether ordinary school children would care for them.
>
> 588. Four Winds Farm. By Mrs Molesworth.
> One of the best of Mrs Molesworth's dream-like tales.

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1. 'Art in the Nursery', op.cit., p. 250.

2. Yonge, op.cit., p. 75.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 76.

589. Down the Snow Stairs. By Alice Corkran.
Of the same type.[1]

And in 1897 J. Newby Hetherington distinguished quite clearly, by his descriptions, that 'fairy tale' denoted 'three kinds or classes of fairy tales' — Märchen, Kunstmärchen and fantasy novels, though he does not use these terms.[2]

In the twentieth century, Kunstmärchen have tended to be distinguished from the other two genres by the use of terms typically consisting of an adjective and 'fairy tale'. Thus Louis MacNiece refers to 'sophisticated fairy tales such as Hans Andersen's';[3] the folklorist Max Luthi contrasts the 'genuine fairy tale' with 'many so-called "literary" fairy tales';[4] and two recent bibliographical references can call Andrew Lang's Prince Prigio and Prince Ricardo 'original fairy tales',[5] and Oscar Wilde's short works of fantasy 'invented fairy tales'.[6]

This way of distinguishing the Kunstmärchen would be perfectly acceptable if it were not that traditionally, fantasy novels have also attracted to themselves the same sort of composite phrases. In the nineteenth century Carroll himself referred three times in his introductory verses to Through the Looking-Glass as a 'fairy-tale', and Andrew Lang referred in his essay 'Modern Fairy Tales' to Alice

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1. Ibid.

2. Hetherington, J. Newby, 'The Use of Fairy Tales in the Education of the Young' (1897), in A.P.G., op.cit., pp. 146-47.

3. MacNeice, Louis, Varieties of Parable, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge, 1965, p. 7.

4. Luthi, op.cit., p. 50.

5. Bibliographical reference in Andrew Lang, Prince Prigio and Prince Ricardo (1889 and 1893), ed. Peter F. Neumeyer, Garland, New York, 1976, p. iv.

6. Anon., After Alice: A Catalogue of an Exhibition of Children's Books, Library Association, London, 1977, p. 18.

imitations as 'new fairy tales'.[1] In the twentieth century this tradition has been continued by George Orwell ironically sub-titling his satiric beast-fable-novel Animal Farm: A Fairy Story (1945), or C.S. Lewis sub-titling his fantasy novel That Hideous Strength: a modern fairy-tale for grown-ups (1945). When Charity Chang refers to a fantasy short story by Ouida an 'artistic fairy tale', she is following this tradition.[2] All these phrases, however loose, are preferable, however, to Bettina Hürlimann's term 'nonsense' for the fantasy novel (probably stemming from characterisations of Alice as 'nonsense'), which she applies even to such a work as Peter Pan.[3]

Today, even though there is no exact and commonly accepted terminology to distinguish precisely between Märchen, Kunstmärchen and fantasy novels (and short stories), there is at least an awareness that these are three (or four) separate genres.

At this point, I would like to give an account of how the works of Mrs Molesworth have been classified over the years. A list will suffice to indicate that despite the prejudice against finding a place for children's literature within traditional genres, Mrs Molesworth's 'novels' for children were so called very early on, and that even her 'fantasy novels' have been recognised as requiring some such distinctive label.

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1. Lang, Andrew, 'Modern Fairy Tales' (1892), in A.P.G., op.cit., p. 133.

2. Chang, Charity, '"The Nürnberg Stove" as an Artistic Fairy Tale', Children's Literature, Vol. 5, 1976, p. 148.

3. Hürlimann, Bettina, Three Centuries of Children's Books in Europe (1959), tr. Brian Alderson, O.U.P., London, 1967, p. 76.

Mrs Molesworth:

Novels for children

Saturday Review)		: 'stories for children'
Scottish Leader)	(c.1889)	: 'charming stories of child life and character'
Graphic)		: 'story of child-life'[1]
'F.H.L.' (1893)		: 'charming books'[2]
Sarah Tooley (1897)		: 'Mrs Molesworth might be described as the novelist of the little ones'[3]
Isabel Stuart Robson (1900)		: 'studies of child-life'[4]
Bella Sydney Woolf (1906)		: 'children's books'[5]
Marghanita Laski (1950)		: 'the novel for very young children'[6]
Roger Lancelyn Green (1957)		: 'child-novels'; 'stories of real life'[7]

Fantasy Novels[8]

Charlotte Yonge (1887)	: 'dream-like tales'[9]
Edward Salmon (1887)	: 'fairy or semi-fairy tales'[10]
Mrs Molesworth (1894)	: 'fairy tales'[11]

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1. Quoted from the end-papers of Mrs Molesworth, Sweet Content, Griffith, Farran, Okeden and Welsh, London and Sydney, 1891, on Mrs Molesworth's The Old Pincushion (1889).

2. 'F.H.L.', 'A Popular Writer for Children, Mrs Molesworth', The Westminster Budget, Oct. 20, 1893, typescript sent to me by Ruth Robertson, p. 1.

3. Tooley, Sarah A., 'Some Women Novelists', The Woman at Home, Dec. 1897, typescript sent to me by Ruth Robertson, p. 1.

4. Robson, Isabel Stuart, Story Weavers: or Writers for the Young, Robert Culling, London, 1900, typescript of relevant section sent to me by Ruth Robertson, p. 1.

5. Woolf, Bella Sydney, 'Mrs Molesworth and "Carrots"' in 'Children's Classics', The Quiver, Series 3, Vol. 41, June 1906, p. 674.

6. Laski, Marghanita, Mrs Ewing, Mrs Molesworth and Mrs Hodgson Burnett, Arthur Barker, London, 1950, p. 69.

7. Green, Roger Lancelyn, 'Mrs Molesworth', Junior Bookshelf, July 1957, pp. 103, 107; 102.

8. The context makes it clear that these are being referred to.

9. Yonge, op.cit., p. 76.

10. Salmon, Edward, 'Literature for the Little Ones' (1887, 1888), in A.P.G., op.cit., p. 59.

11. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, 'How I Write My Children's Stories', Little Folks, July 1894, p. 17.

Fantasy Novels (Continued)

Elva Smith (1933)	: 'semi-fairy tales'[1]
Roger Lancelyn Green (1946)	: 'visionary tales'[2]
Marghanita Laski (1950)	: 'magic novel'[3]
Anne Thaxter Eaton (1953)	: [books]'which combine magic and reality'[4]
Marion Lochhead (1956)	: 'new fairy tales'[5]
Gillian Avery (1960)	: 'stories of magic'[6]
(1968)	: 'fairy stories'[7]

Kunstmärchen

Roger Lancelyn Green (1951)	: 'the fairy-tale proper'[8]
(1957)	: 'perfect short fairy tales'; 'long and unusual fairy stories'[9]
(1960)	: [the]'superb fairy tales outwardly in the old folklore tradition'; 'fairy stories'[10]

c. 'Fantasy' as Literary Method

In a work of fantasy, written in whatever genre, the writer may use the depiction of the suspension of physical law, not merely as an

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1. Smith, Elva, Children's Literature: History and Syllabus, American Library Association, Chicago, 1933, p. 189.

2. Green, Roger Lancelyn, Tellers of Tales: British Authors of children's books from 1800 to 1964 (1946), Franklin Watts, New York, 1965, p. 113.

3. Laski, op.cit., p. 69.

4. Eaton, Anne Thaxter, 'A Scientist, a Realist, and a Purveyor of Magic', in A Critical History of Children's Literature (1953), ed. Cornelia Meigs et.al., The Macmillan Co and Collier-Macmillan Ltd, London etc., 1969 (rev. ed.), p. 173.

5. Lochhead, Marion, Their First Ten Years: Victorian Childhood, John Murray, London, 1956, p. 188.

6. Avery, Gillian, 'Introduction' to Mrs Molesworth, The Carved Lions (1895), Faith Press, London, 1960, p. 5.

7. Avery, Gillian, 'Introduction' to Mrs Molesworth, My New Home (1894), Victor Gollancz, London, 1968, p. 9.

8. Green, Roger Lancelyn, 'Mrs Molesworth and her Books', New Library World, Nov. 1951, p. 374.

9. Green, 'Mrs Molesworth', op.cit., pp. 106-107.

10. Green, Roger Lancelyn, Mrs Molesworth, Bodley Head, London, 1960, p. 64. This is hereafter cited as B.H.M.

attention-getting device or 'gimmick', but to stand for, or to point to, some central concern of his own, which he feels it important to communicate. The depiction of the suspension of physical law then becomes, as it were, a figure or 'metaphor' for this concern. Of course, it is a truism to say that all literature of merit (apart from treatises and essays) communicates an author's vision of life obliquely, but the point is that the writer of works of fantasy communicates this vision, if indeed he has one, in this particularly obvious 'metaphorical' way, as well as in all the other ways open to writers of narrative fiction.

Despite Lillian Smith's 'Like poetry, fantasy uses a metaphorical approach to the perception of universal truth',[1] a good many works of fantasy do not give the impression that the writer is communicating any vision of anything. Nevertheless a passage from a somewhat precious sketch by Kahlil Gibran does indeed seem to make a point. The Goddess of Fantasy tells the narrator

> Isaiah composed words of wisdom as a necklace of precious stones mounted on the golden chain of my love. St. John recounted his vision on my behalf. And Dante could not explore the haven of souls save by my guidance. I am a metaphor embracing reality, and reality revealing the singleness of the spirit; and a witness confirming the deeds of the gods.[2]

It is not clear what exactly Gibran means by 'fantasy', but since the Goddess mentions works of literature (by Isaiah and Dante), I think I am justified in citing him.[3] Perhaps it is true that good works of fantasy, like all works of good literature, are in a sense

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1. Smith, op.cit., p. 150.

2. Gibran, Kahlil, 'The Goddess of Fantasy', Thoughts and Meditations, tr. Anthony R. Ferris, Heinemann, London, 1961, p. 64.

3. He mentions 'thought', 'imagination' and 'dream' in his 'sketch', and 'Fantasy' for him may refer to all or any of these instead of or in addition to 'works of fantasy', which is the meaning I have taken.

'metaphors embracing reality', indirect ways of talking about human problems, concerns and issues which are very 'real' indeed.

A metaphor is an obviously untrue verbal statement; the verb used or implied forces the reader to find out the relatively abstract quality shared by two unlike entities, and focuses attention on the quality itself. The basic assumption of a reader of any work of literature is that it has some connection with some aspect of real life — otherwise it would not be intelligible. Works of fantasy are narrative fiction, so the basic assumption, no matter how modified, is something like 'The work of fantasy mirrors the events and figures of real life.' Having to consider just how the 'mirroring' works, since it obviously does not accurately reflect or literally depict, focuses attention on the particular quality of real life which has been emphasised by that juxtaposition of the two unlike entities.

Satires, like works of fantasy, may be written in any of a number of genres: there are satiric novels, essays, comedies. If the 'spirit' of satire is, broadly, to force the reader to the awareness that something is out of joint, then equally, the 'spirit' of works of fantasy, no matter how generically disparate these are, is to force the reader to see that there is a reason for the depiction of the suspension of physical law, and to attempt to discover this reason.

Thus it may be said that at the heart of (good) works of fantasy is the author's belief that the essential inner nature of things may be seen more clearly if he depicts some external objects and events as divested of familiar assumptions about the physical laws under which they exist or occur.

It is Mrs Molesworth's works of fantasy, rather than her non-fantasy narrative fictions, that have endured. This may be accounted for by saying that it is easier for writers of a certain temperament

to express their central concerns or vision of life in a work of fantasy than in other kinds of narrative fiction. Alternatively, it may tentatively be said that good works of fantasy tend to have some 'universal applicability' about them, perhaps their very use of fantasy makes them automatically more obviously 'meaningful' or 'metaphorical' than, say, good 'slices of life', which by their very nature tend to put one off looking for these meaningful, metaphorical significances.

In this context, it is interesting to note that during Mrs Molesworth's lifetime itself, Charlotte Yonge seems to have felt this 'universal applicability'. She puts Hermy, non-fantasy, that 'pleasant nursery tale' under the rubric of Drawing-Room Stories for 'readers of a superior degree',[1] and Four Winds Farm, a work of fantasy admittedly dealing in part with a sphere of life lower than that of Hermy but in no way more difficult than Hermy in such matters as vocabulary, under the rubric of Fairy Tales. And, she says, these latter 'should be regarded as treats' for those same parish schoolchildren who might find Hermy too alien from their experience.[2]

Today, Roger Lancelyn Green makes something of the same point when he says that

> In deciding which of Mrs Molesworth's books are most acceptable to children today, it has usually been assumed that those dealing with magic present the fewest difficulties — apparently on the assumption that any mental strain necessary to swallow the wonders will automatically engulf any strangeness as to the period setting in the same action.
>
> There is a good deal of truth in this, as the continuing popularity of The Cuckoo Clock has shown.[3]

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1. Yonge, op.cit., p. 35.

2. Ibid., p. 75.

3. Green, Tellers of Tales, op.cit., p. 113.

I would say that perhaps it is not the mental strain of swallowing the wonders (i.e. the fantasy) that makes the rest go down, but the initial interest in perceiving them and perhaps, an even unconscious responding to their almost inevitable metaphorical import which cancels out the disadvantages of trying to understand a 'period' setting. This incentive would be lacking in a comparable non-fantasy narrative fiction.

d. Children's Literature and 'Fantasy'

Children's literature is not a genre: particular works written for children can be seen as belonging to traditional genres. Works of fantasy do not constitute a genre. There is no necessary connection between children's literature and works of fantasy. However, during the 'golden age', many excellent works of fantasy were written for children. Felicity Hughes argues convincingly that, in late-Victorian times,

> the exclusion of children from the readership of the serious novel was associated with the acceptance of a version of realism. One consequence of the acceptance of realism was that fantasy was immediately déclassé. Since fantasy can be seen as the antithesis of realism, it seemed to follow, to those who espoused the realist cause, that fantasy was also the opposite of serious, i.e. trivial or frivolous.[1]

Thus,

> a consequence of the prejudice that fantasy is childish has been that the writer of fantasy has been directed into writing for children, no matter how good he or she might be.[2]

In keeping with her time, Mrs Molesworth wrote no notable works of fantasy for adults but she did write notable works of fantasy for

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1. Hughes, Felicity, 'Children's Literature: Theory and Practice', E.L.H., Vol. 45, Fall 1978, p. 553.

2. Ibid., p. 554.

children. Hence, this thesis is simultaneously a study of particular works of children's literature, and particular works of fantasy.

III. SCOPE OF THIS THESIS

Having examined in the previous sections of this introduction important basic premises regarding children's literature and the question of fantasy in general, I am now at liberty to proceed to the broader task of critical analysis of the individual texts. The broad outlines of my approach, dictated to some degree by differences in genre, are as follows:

THE CUCKOO CLOCK: fantasy novel

A. Conventions: the literary conventions drawn upon in The Cuckoo Clock for the depiction of the protagonist and of the fantasy events and objects; how the combination of the conventions resulted in an intimate connection between the phantasy of the protagonist and the fantasy adventures in the novel; the literary influence of this combination.

B. Assumptions as revealed by character portrayal: Mrs Molesworth's limitations on psychological realism; the morals she inculcated; her vision of childhood; and her social attitudes.

C. Narrative Art: Techniques employed by Mrs Molesworth in the fantasy novel: narrative voice; dream machinery; authentication of the fantasy adventures; 'indeterminacy'; control of distance; and patterns in The Cuckoo Clock. Ultimately, it is the skilled use of these that make the novel a classic of its kind.

'THE STORY OF SUNNY': Kunstmärchen

A. The allegorical Kunstmärchen: Mrs Molesworth's place in the changing attitudes to the Kunstmärchen.

B. Assumptions as revealed by an allegorical exegesis: Social allegory; mythical allegory; stylised representation of childhood; levels of meaning; the erotic undertones of the Kunstmärchen.

C. Narrative Art: Techniques employed by Mrs Molesworth in interpolating the Kunstmärchen into a 'realistic' novel; and a comparison with another very similar Kunstmärchen, 'The Selfish Giant' by Oscar Wilde.

THE CUCKOO CLOCK (1877)

"I left The Cuckoo Clock yesterday."

"And what may the cuckoo clock be?" I demanded.

"The devil take you," Dermot said. "You to be calling yourself a man of letters and you've never heard of The Cuckoo Clock. Does the name of Mrs Molesworth mean nothing to you?"

"My infant mind was suckled on the classics," I declared.

"So is The Cuckoo Clock a classic," Dermot answered. "And now let's have it...."

Howard Spring, My Son, My Son

I suppose it is true to say that a fairy tale should be either very naïve or very sophisticated. It should be either Mrs. Molesworth's Cuckoo Clock or Thomas Mann's Holy Sinner.

A.O.J. Cockshutt, 'David Copperfield'

Who lasts a hundred years can have no flaw,
I hold that wit a classic, good in law.

Pope, Epistles

Perhaps an analysis of a work by Mrs Molesworth requires some preliminary justification, and that in some detail. The Cuckoo Clock (1877), was Mrs Molesworth's first fantasy novel for children, published by Macmillan. It is still in print today, and is worth considering, if for this reason alone. To quote John Rowe Townsend,

> Where the works of the past are concerned, I have much faith in the sifting process of time — "time" being the shorthand for the collective wisdom of a great many people over a long period of time .... Survival is a good test of a book.[1]

In 1961, in his Bodley Head monograph on Mrs Molesworth, Roger Lancelyn Green noted that 'her books have been coming back slowly but surely during the last twenty years'.[2] Nevertheless, of Mrs Molesworth's total output of over a hundred books, in 1978 only two books — The Cuckoo Clock and The Carved Lions —were in print in Britain, in editions for children, and three others, apart from these, in a series of American reprints intended not for children but for students of children's literature.

It is evident, then, that the continued popularity of The Cuckoo Clock is not due to any fad for Mrs Molesworth's work as a whole. On the contrary, as Lance Salway remarks, 'Although the best of Mrs Molesworth's work is remembered and read today, her books and reputation have suffered an unjust eclipse.'[3]

The survival of The Cuckoo Clock, would thus appear to be due to some intrinsic quality in the book itself. It is perhaps not altogether coincidental that of all Mrs Molesworth's books, many of which were illustrated by more than one person, it is only The Cuckoo Clock which

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1. Townsend, John Rowe, Written for Children, Garnet Miller, London, 1965, p. 9.

2. Green, B.H.M., op.cit., p. 70.

3. Salway, Lance, A.P.G., op.cit., p. 520.

has had the good fortune to be illustrated by three famous illustrators.[1]

It is not only the continuing endurance of The Cuckoo Clock that justifies considering it critically. Though it was her first full-length fantasy novel for children, in a way it is representative of all her fantasy novels. Marghanita Laski points out that Mrs Molesworth's fantasy novels all follow the same pattern, and are almost written to a formula.[2] I would go even further, and say that while her later fantasy novels for children are all rehashes of The Cuckoo Clock, the attitudes and values which are displayed in the book are the same attitudes and values as those of all her novels for children. Hence, while considering this book, I refer to both her other fantasy novels, and to those which Laski called 'the novel for very young children'.[3]

The Cuckoo Clock is representative of one strand of Mrs Molesworth's work, and this strand is representative of a certain kind of late Victorian writing for children. Thus the work is worth considering

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1. The first edition was illustrated by Walter Crane, perhaps the most distinguished of the artists who illustrated Mrs Molesworth's books. His pictures 'were done in black and white, with his usual heavy pen strokes .... in the apparently necessary reduction in size the clearness of many of his pictures is lost' (Bertha E. Mahony, et.al., Illustrators of Children's Books 1744-1945, Horn Book Inc, Boston, 1965, p. 58). With regard to The Cuckoo Clock, at least, Janet Adam Smith's strictures seem to me to be justified: 'Crane's full page pictures are sometimes rather flat and dull, his human figures are conventional, so many of the children have plain elderly faces...' (Children's Illustrated Books, Collins, London, 1943, p. 32). Ernest Shepard's illustrations for the 1954 Dent edition of The Cuckoo Clock depict the cuckoo as rather too fierce, and his Griselda has none of the charm of his Christopher Robin. The best illustrations to the book are those of Charles Edmund Brock, for the second Macmillan edition of 1933. These capture the spirit of the book. Griselda's clothes are something of an anachronism, but the general tone of the pictures is much the same as those of C.E. Brock's illustrations to Jane Austen's novels. On Mrs Molesworth's illustrators, see R.E.D. Sketchley, 'Some Children's Book Illustrators', op.cit., in A.P.G., op.cit., pp. 264-66; Janet Adam Smith, Children's Illustrated Books, op.cit., p. 34; Green, Tellers of Tales, op.cit., p. 112.

2. Laski, op.cit., pp. 66, 68-69.

3. She classes Mrs Molesworth's novels into four groups: the 'adult novel, the magical novel and the novel for very young children' and the novel 'for older children, some for adolescent girls ... some for children of any ages ranging from about ten to sixteen' (Laski, op.cit., p. 69).

because of its historical importance. Lewis Carroll and George MacDonald notwithstanding, it is true that 'her name dominated children's books for some thirty years, at the end of the last century and the beginning of this'.[1]

At the height of her popularity, during the 1880's, Mrs Molesworth 'was writing as many as five or six books in a year, probably in order to keep herself and her family and pay the school bills....'[2] She might be called the Enid Blyton of her day, for she wrote in the same prolific manner. Both may with some justification be seen as examples of the phenomenon of hack-writers.[3]

At the very least then, as the enduring and representative work of the Victorian Blyton,[4] The Cuckoo Clock deserves consideration, for it will indicate the elements which made a prolific writer for children

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1. Avery, 'Introduction' to Mrs Molesworth's My New Home, op.cit., p. 9.

2. Green, Tellers of Tales, op.cit., p. 112.

3. Perhaps Mrs Molesworth and Enid Blyton wrote so much for the same reason, to maintain themselves and their children, for the marriages of both writers were unsuccessful (see B.H.M., p. 37; and Barbara Stoney, Enid Blyton: A Biography, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1968, passim.). However, though her marriage to Major Molesworth brought her little money, and might even have been a drain on her resources till they separated, Mrs Molesworth did have a rich 'papa' (his will was probated at £20,000), and it is likely that he made her a handsome marriage settlement and helped her subsequently (this and other biographical information from Miss Ruth Robertson, author of a forthcoming biography, in a letter dated April 1978). Mrs Molesworth's large output was thus not motivated solely by money, though she was a good businesswoman. She protested that she 'never regarded herself as a "professional" writer ... taking her books greatly as a recreation' (Woolf, op.cit., p. 675).

4. Three of Mrs Molesworth's inferior novels for children, The Palace in the Garden, Greyling Towers, and The Grim House, read in fact like early versions of the sort of adventure stories that Blyton wrote: the Secret or the Adventure series. They contain the same mysterious houses, families with secrets, mysterious faces at windows, secret passages, absent parents, and inquisitive, clever, and daring children. With such books as Nurse Heatherdale's Story, where a child discovers an ancestral miser's hidden treasure, or The Old Pincushion, where the children discover a missing will, these books by both writers may be called Gothic-and-water.

popular in her own day.

A. CONVENTIONS

a. The Protagonist

The protagonist of the novel is a little girl named Griselda. She is a deprived child, without parents or companionship. In making her protagonist a deprived child, Mrs Molesworth was drawing on a number of distinct traditions. Griselda's deprivations stem from the fact that she has lost her mother, and that her father is far away from her. She has been left in the care of her great-aunts, who provide no companionship or recreation for her.

The youthful protagonists of folk tales are often neglected by their parents. The traditional youngest or third son who succeeds in his task of winning the princess, is often not treated as well by his parents as are his elder siblings. Their opinion of him is reflected in the names he is given: he is often called Dumbling, or Dunderhead. Cinderella has no share in the love which her stepmother lavishes on her stepsisters, and her father is a nonentity. Hansel and Gretel are abandoned by their parents. Hop-o'-My-Thumb is neglected by his mother while she pampers another child. In the Märchen, these children make up for their deprivations by 'showing' their parents that they can succeed on their own merits and capabilities. In the Märchen, then, Mrs Molesworth might have found a model for her portrait of a modern Cinderella, living without parental love or care; and this picture might have been reinforced by her reading of such short works of fantasy as Hans Andersen's 'The Little Match Girl',[1] which also deals with a

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1. See pp. 58-61 of this thesis.

deprived child. In Andersen's work, the happy ending is not a sine qua non, and the little match girl dies of the cold in which her cruel father had forced her to stand in order to earn a living.

The parentless, deprived child also appeared in other, earlier, fantasy works for children in the Victorian period. Three of the very famous, classic works of fantasy dealt with the fantasy adventures of deprived children. Snowflower, in Frances Browne's Granny's Wonderful Chair (1857), Tom the chimney-sweep in Charles Kingsley's The Water Babies (1863), and Prince Dolor in Mrs Craik's The Little Lame Prince (1875)[1] are all orphans, with no companions or friends, who have to suffer physical hardship before they achieve happiness. Like Griselda, they have fantasy adventures, but in their case, these do not take place in their dreams. Also, unlike her, none of the three is an ordinary middle-class child. Snowflower belongs to a bygone pastoral world, Tom is a chimney-sweep, and Dolor, though presented in depth in a way rare in the Kunstmärchen, is a prince. These children, unlike Griselda, make up for their deprivations and achieve happiness after going on an extended journey, a sort of quest. Nevertheless, the element of deprivation is common to all of these works of fantasy.

The Cuckoo Clock is a novel, and perhaps Mrs Molesworth was also drawing upon a convention she found in her own childhood reading of various early middle-class novels for children, such as the family story or chronicle: for example, Catherine Sinclair's Holiday House (1839), or the later American writer Elizabeth Wetherell's The Wide,

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1. Mrs Molesworth recommends this in 'The Best Books for Children — II', The Pall Mall Gazette, Oct. 29, 1887, page no. illegible. In this she mentions that 'I must confess that my practical acquaintance with recent literature for children is less extensive than might be expected, owing to a long residence out of England', so it may be presumed that the earlier books she mentions, not, probably, The Little Lame Prince, were read in her own childhood or youth.

Wide World (1850), or Charlotte Yonge's The Daisy Chain (1856).[1] In these novels, the children are left motherless, and their father or guardians are unable to cope with the strains of bringing them up by themselves. Sinclair's Harry and Laura Graham make up for their deprivation by sheer naughtiness at first, till later, after their brother dies, they take refuge in faith, and quieten down. The May children of Charlotte Yonge take refuge in good works and practical projects, also buoyed up by their faith. Despite the fact that some of these family stories were written from an Evangelical point of view, and others from a High Anglican one, and that they were about children of various ages, the basic convention of the deprived, motherless child, finding an outlet for its sense of deprivation, had been established long before Mrs Molesworth came to write The Cuckoo Clock.

The deprived child did not of course belong exclusively to the middle classes. Charlotte Yonge mentioned the 'multitudes' of mid- and late-Victorian 'street Arab tales', written mainly by Evangelical writers, which were calculated to stir the hearts of their young readers with pity for the misfortunes of their protagonists.[2] Hesba Stretton's Jessica's First Prayer (1867), Little Meg's Children (1868) and Alone in London (1869) are famous examples. Jessica's mother deserts her, Little Meg's mother dies and her father remains absent for a very long time, and Tony, in the third book, is an orphan, with no place to lay his head. Other famous works of this kind were written by 'Brenda', who wrote Froggy's Little Brother (new ed. 1875), and

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1. She remembers enthusiastically and at some length The Wide, Wide World and the 'delight of Miss Yonge's books' (Mrs Molesworth, 'Story-Reading and Story-Writing', Chambers's Journal, Vol. 75, Nov. 1898, p. 773).

2. Yonge, op.cit., p. 21.

Mrs O.F. Walton.[1] The children depicted are parentless, or with neglectful, drunken parents, and suffer not only from lack of affection, but from actual physical hardship. They react to their deprivation either by dying, or by finding some kind adult, often of the lower classes, to provide for them.

The picture of the deprived child was not restricted to children's literature. There were such books as Florence Montgomery's extremely popular Misunderstood (1869) which was meant for adults.[2] It dealt with the misfortunes of a pair of motherless children, Humphrey and Miles, misunderstood by their father. This kind of writing had its apotheosis in Mrs Henry Wood's East Lynne (1861). Little Willie is deserted by his mother, and neglected by his father and stepmother. Here again, in these books, the deprived child reacts to its deprivation by dying — in the odour of sanctity.

Peter Coveney describes the picture of the child in the nineteenth century novel. He shows how the nineteenth century novel had as one of its concerns the theme of the pathos of the child, oppressed and deprived by both its parents and society. He cites the social novels of Disraeli, Mrs Gaskell, and Kingsley, the works of Mrs Trollope and 'Charlotte Elizabeth', Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre, and the work of George Eliot.[3] He makes the point, however, that the figure of the

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1. Mrs Molesworth's own 'Once Kissed' is an example of this sort of tale. In it she describes ironically how the heroine's
> mind and fancy were peopled with "Froggy's little brother Ben's (sic)," or small women of the "Little Meg" type — rarities assuredly, though far be it from me to say such cannot and do not exist, in all the greater loveliness from the contrast with their terrible surroundings

(Mrs Molesworth, Studies and Stories, A.D. Innes, London, 1893, p. 136).

2. Mrs Molesworth mentions this 'beautiful' work in 'Story-Reading ...', op.cit., p. 774.

3. Coveney, Peter, The Image of Childhood: The Individual and Society: A Study of the Theme in English Literature (1957), Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1967, pp. 92-94.

defenceless child, hounded and set upon sometimes by the very adults who should be its guardians, is seen at its best in the work of Dickens. Dickens's work is full of children who are deprived both spiritually of love and physically of comfort. These children are sometimes orphaned, or left with one ineffectual parent, or with neglectful parents. They rarely have any companions or play, and they lack the security of parents. Pip, Esther Summerson, Louisa and Tom Gradgrind, Paul and Florence Dombey, Arthur Clennam, Little Nell, David Copperfield — whatever the social situation of these children, they have one thing in common: they lack parental love and rarely have any companions or play. They make up for this deprivation by dying, or going to the bad, or by finding a protector, or by simply managing to survive until they grow up and can face the world by themselves.

Mrs Molesworth thus found the figure of the deprived child, virtually orphaned, lacking both companions of its own age and recreation, ready to hand when she started to write full-length novels for children. Like all the children mentioned above, Griselda is deprived of parental love. Nevertheless, Mrs Molesworth was careful to exclude the element of deliberate neglect on the part of adults, or any physical hardship, because her theme was not that of the put-upon child, but rather of the child who finds fulfilment in fantasy adventures in its dreams. In other words, the emphasis in The Cuckoo Clock is not upon the deprivation of the child, as it had been in some of the works mentioned above, but rather on the means by which this deprivation is compensated for.

Nevertheless, in The Cuckoo Clock, Griselda does assume the symbolic role of the spiritually deprived orphan. She is the protagonist of the novel, and there are virtually no other child characters who play more than a supernumerary part. Yet she is Everychild, in the sense that she has something in common with all the

other children who are mentioned in the book. Her grandmother, Sybilla, was orphaned, and lived with her aged grandfather.[1] Her father was orphaned and lived with his aunts. The little boy Phil, whom she meets at the end of the book, is virtually orphaned. Roger Lancelyn Green emphasises the fact that there are only three child deaths in the whole corpus of Mrs Molesworth's work, and that none of the parents of her child characters dies within the compass of the story.[2] Even so, Mrs Molesworth was not able to escape the aura of death which hung over Victorian books for children. Griselda appears dressed in mourning for her mother (p. 3),[3] Sybilla's grandfather refers to his impending death (p. 82), Griselda has a vision of Sybilla's funeral (p. 86), her great-aunts tell her that her grandfather died of a broken heart (p. 88), they refer to their own impending deaths (p. 27). Phil is separated from his mother because she is seriously ill (pp. 139, 141).

Most of the children in Mrs Molesworth's full-length fantasy novels for children are orphans and friendless. (I use the term 'orphan' loosely, to include a child who has only one parent from whom it is separated.) Hugh in The Tapestry Room (1879) is separated from his grandfather, and has no parents. Rollo and Maia in Christmas Tree Land (1884) are separated from their father, who is overseas, like Griselda's father. Ruby and Mavis in The Children of the Castle (1890) are away from their father who is at court. Geraldine in The Carved Lions (1895) (which some consider a fantasy novel) is separated from her

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1. Sybil or Sybilla is the single most common name in Mrs Molesworth's books, but she appears to have known nobody of that name.

2. Green, 'The Golden Age of Children's Books', op.cit., p. 9.

3. All page references in the text are to The Cuckoo Clock (1877), Macmillan, London, 1933.

brother who is at boarding-school, and her parents, who are in South America. Leonora in The Magic Nuts (1898) has no mother, a father who is away on business, and her new-found playmate, Hildegarde, is a lonely child. Mary in The Woodpigeons and Mary (1901) is an orphan. Sybil in The Ruby Ring (1904) has both parents, but they are unable to control her, and she has to be sent away to be taken care of by her more strong-willed aunt. Even here, the problem is the same: Sybil has too much of the wrong kind of affection from her parents, rather than the reverse, and the quality of deprivation remains constant. In Mrs Molesworth's one collection of interlinked works of fantasy for children in a fantasy framework, The Enchanted Garden (1892), Alix and Rafe, who listen to the stories, are deprived of their mother's company because she is too busy with the wedding of their elder sister. And in Mrs Molesworth's last book for children, Fairies Afield (fantasy short stories) which was published in 1911, most of the protagonists are orphans. Thus, this element in the Molesworth formula seems to be fairly constant: the children who undergo the fantasy adventures are orphans, and their adventures are in some way linked to this circumstance. The 'orphan' or deprived-child element also appears, though not so frequently, in Mrs Molesworth's non-fantasy novels for children. This is particularly notable in Carrots (1876), where Carrots's father treats the little boy very harshly, and in Grandmother Dear (1878), Hermy (1881), The Boys and I (1883), Two Little Waifs (1883), Lettice (1884), The Little Old Portrait (1884), Us (1885), as well as others, until the end of her literary career.

b. Fantasy: events and objects

The first element in the formula, then, is the deprived child. The next is the fantasy events and objects. Griselda goes to the Country

of Nodding Mandarins, to Butterfly Land, and to the Moon. The basic idea behind these journeys almost certainly derives from Alice in Wonderland.[1] The Cuckoo Clock seems, at first sight, to be one of the host of Alice imitations.[2] Most of these imitations follow the same basic pattern — a child (usually a girl) goes into another world where she meets with and talks to creatures which do not exist in her own, where ordinary methods of locomotion are replaced by others. Griselda is one of the many literary little girls (Rhoda, Kitty, Flora, Elsie, Ethel, Mabel, Muriel, Merle, Joan, Maggie, Phylis, Olga, Trixie, Dot, Gwyneth, Girlie, Bluebell, Dorothy etc.) who bear a family resemblance to Alice, and most of whose adventures are dreams.[3] This was noticed in the American periodical The Nation by one of the earliest reviewers of the book: 'Griselda in Mrs Molesworth's The Cuckoo Clock reminded the reviewer of Alice, but her story had real originality.'[4]

In Mrs Molesworth's defence, it may be said that she was one of the first to take advantage of the new mode that Carroll had discovered, using only the main Carrollean framework and avoiding the other features (puns, verse parodies) which were seized upon by Carroll's other imitators.

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1. Mrs Molesworth used two quotations from Through the Looking Glass (1872) as chapter epigraphs to her first full-length novel for children, Carrots (1876), and a quotation from Alice (1865) in her novel Hathercourt Rectory, published a year after The Cuckoo Clock.

2. On Alice imitations, see pp. 4-5 of this thesis and R.B. Shaberman and Denis Crutch, 'Handlist of Alice Imitations', Under the Quizzing Glass: A Lewis Carroll Miscellany, Magpie Press, London, 1972, pp. 53-56.

3. In his essay 'About the Symbolisation of ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND' (in Aspects of Alice, ed. Robert Phillips, Vanguard Press, New York, 1971, pp. 308-315), Martin Grotjahn has interpreted Alice herself as a phallic symbol. Dorothy, the heroine of L. Frank Baum's The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, perhaps the next most famous in the line of these little girls, has suffered the same fate in Osmond Beckwith's 'The Oddness of Oz' (Children's Literature, Vol. 5, 1976, pp. 74-91). I have not given in to the temptation of following suit with Griselda, because I do not think that she represents the phallus, and not because of any hostility to psychoanalytical criticism.

4. Darling, Richard, The Rise of Children's Book Reviewing in America, 1865-1881, R.R. Bowker, New York, 1968, p. 76, referring to The Nation, 25, Dec. 6, 1877, p. 353.

Nevertheless, The Cuckoo Clock appears to derive certain specific motifs from Alice. Alice is constantly growing big and small, and so is Griselda, who cannot decide, on her journeys, whether it is she who has shrunk or other things which have grown. But the adoption of a motif does not imply the adoption of an attitude towards the use of it. Alice's changes of size are the source of constant anxiety to her, whereas Griselda, though puzzled, is not particularly disturbed by them. This is because Alice makes her journey through Wonderland with only herself to rely upon, for she has left her faithful cat Dinah behind. Griselda, on the contrary, has a cuckoo out of a clock with her to guide her and explain matters. The cuckoo may resemble the creatures whom Alice meets in Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land who hector her and patronise her — the Caterpillar, Humpty Dumpty, the Red Queen. He too is acerbic and patronising, but whereas Carroll's creatures are unhelpful to Alice (they rarely give her directions), asking her questions which she cannot answer, the cuckoo is Griselda's guide, explaining the new worlds in which Griselda finds herself, never deserting her in her time of need. Carroll's creatures question Alice's very identity: they ask her who she is ('You? Who are you?'), call her a serpent, a fabulous monster, a dream. Griselda is never tormented in this way.

This difference in tone carries over into the other motifs which The Cuckoo Clock may have derived from Alice. Both books involve a journey to a beautiful underground garden with flowers and fountains, yet Alice's journey is full of disappointments and hazards, and the garden is chaotic when she finds it. Griselda, on the other hand, finds the garden of Butterfly Land simply by resolving to trust the cuckoo and obey his instructions: she finds her way in without any trouble, and it is a realm of order, industry and harmony. The Mad Hatter's party and the banquet in Looking Glass Land are chaotic,

strongly contrasting with the various banquets in The Cuckoo Clock. Again, the end of Alice resembles the end of Griselda's sojourn in Butterfly Land. Alice is in court and the angry cards rise up and fall down upon her. She screams, and wakes. Griselda too screams at the onset of a swarm of butterflies, yet they rush down to kiss her, and the ever-watchful cuckoo throws his cloak around her to protect her. While Alice can cope with the fantasy world only by destroying it, Griselda emerges from Butterfly Land into a deep sleep, to awake, refreshed, the next morning (p. 127).

> Mrs Molesworth laid it down as a rule that a
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> quicksand to be avoided is the introduction, by way of heightening the interest and sensation of a story, of any frightening element.[1]

She remarked disapprovingly of Hans Andersen's 'The Travelling Companion' that 'the wholesale cutting off of heads ... reminds one of Alice in Wonderland!' and perhaps it was the frightening element in Andersen that made her argue for a Bowdlerisation of his work.[2] So, though The Cuckoo Clock draws upon Alice for its basic framework (the dream-journey) and for some situations and characters, it cannot be said to be mere imitation. By omitting the anxiety, and impending violence (the threatened executions, the war in Looking Glass Land) which she found in Alice, by making her fantasy worlds untroubled and secure, she changed the nature of her fantasy novel altogether. Alice and Griselda are both self-assured and courteous little girls, but The Cuckoo Clock is not an imitation of Alice in Wonderland.

As might be expected, many of Mrs Moleworth's other fantasy novels follow the same pattern which The Cuckoo Clock derived from Alice: Hugh and Jeanne go to a series of similar lands (The Tapestry Room),

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1. 'Story-Reading ...', op.cit., p. 774.

2. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, 'Hans Christian Andersen' (1893), in A.P.G., pp. 142; 138, 141.

as do Rollo and Maia (Christmas Tree Land), Ruby and Mavis (The Children of the Castle), Mary (The Wood-pigeons and Mary), Sybil (The Ruby Ring) and Leonora and Hildegarde (The Magic Nuts). They meet various talking animals of varying degrees of friendliness, and return refreshed to their own worlds. It was only in The Ruby Ring that Mrs Molesworth made any striking variation. The Ruby Ring may be described as the full-length offspring of the union of two of Mrs Molesworth's earliest short stories ('Too Bad' and 'Con and the Little People', Tell Me A Story, 1875). In it, Mrs Molesworth draws upon another stock motif, traditional, of great power, also used by her contemporaries George MacDonald in 'The Carasoyn' (1866, 1867) and Andrew Lang in The Gold of Fairnilee (1888): on one of her fantasy adventures, Sybil is in danger of losing her soul to the soulless fairies. On the whole, however, it may be said that as the years went by, Mrs Molesworth's fantasy framework grew more and more slipshod and pedestrian, and that she did not make any more basic changes.

There is another, similar work of fantasy, which preceded Alice by four decades, which might also have influenced The Cuckoo Clock: E.T.A. Hoffmann's Nutcracker and Mouse-King.[1] As in The Cuckoo Clock, here too there is an innocent little girl, Mariechen, who dreams, goes on dream-journeys through various wonderlands. There is an emphasis on food,[2] and a hesitation as to whether the fantasy events are dream or not.[3] There is one important element which does not appear in Alice, but which does indeed appear in The Cuckoo Clock: an emphasis on mechanical moving objects which confuse children by

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1. Mrs Molesworth read this as a child in a translation entitled The Nutcracker of Nuremberg, and found it 'unspeakably fascinating' ('Story-Reading ...', op.cit., p. 773).

2. See p. 116 of this thesis.

3. See pp. 184, 193 of this thesis.

appearing to be alive. Mrs Molesworth might have remembered both Nutcracker and Alice in writing The Cuckoo Clock. Of course, there are differences of tone and approach: at the end of Nutcracker, Mariechen marries Prince Nutcracker whom she has delivered from peril, quite unlike Griselda who grows up and away from the cuckoo and his wonderlands.[1]

George MacDonald's equally famous The Princess and the Goblin, published five years before The Cuckoo Clock, does not seem to have left as much of a mark on it as Alice.[2] Irene is one of the self-possessed, polite, brave little girls who abound in the fantasy novels of the period. She bears no more than a generic resemblance to Griselda. Nevertheless, the picture of the barefoot Griselda tiptoeing her way through the dark passages and mysterious staircases of her great-aunts' house — passages and staircases which exist only at night (pp. 106-107) — recalls the figure of the little Princess's nocturnal roamings in her father's castle. She too wanders among passages and stairways which she cannot otherwise find to discover a world otherwise inaccessible. Of children's books of the period which have survived, at any rate, no others contain quite the same image, which leads me to conclude that the resemblance may not be purely coincidental.[3]

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1. See pp. 130-131 of this thesis.

2. Mrs Molesworth recommends 'The Princess of the Goblins' (sic) in 'The Best Books ...', op.cit.

3. I mention the possible influence of George MacDonald in The Cuckoo Clock because though it is only secondary in this novel, it is extremely apparent in Mrs Molesworth's other books. The epigraph to the first chapter of Carrots (1876), is taken from the famous song of Diamond, 'Baby' in At the Back of the North Wind (1871). It is evident that Diamond, the innocent, saintly helpful little boy, 'God's baby', was in part the model for Carrots and all the Carrots-like little boys in Mrs Molesworth's later work. More important is the North Wind herself, huge, majestic, commanding, both tender and terrible. Mrs Molesworth splits her up into four such figures in the four winds of Four Winds Farm (1887). Forget-me-Not in Mrs Molesworth's The Children of the Castle (1890) is another imitation of the North Wind,

Continued ...

The Cuckoo Clock depicts the voyage of Griselda to the moon on the cuckoo's back. This element is also very conventional. In 1829, T. Crofton Croker had sent his tipsy hero Daniel O'Rourke to the moon on the back of an eagle. This may have suggested Griselda's voyage.

Two other fantasy novels for children, George MacDonald's At the Back of the North Wind (1871), and J.G. Austin's American Alice imitation, Moonfolk (1874), had depicted the dream-visits of two little girls to the moon, before The Cuckoo Clock.

After The Cuckoo Clock, there were several works of fantasy which employed the convention: Andrew Lang's Prince Prigio (1893), S. Ashton's The Green Cat (1905) and G.E. Farrow's The Wallypug in the Moon (1905).

None of these works treats the moon-journey with any seriousness at all. Moonfolk and The Wallypug in the Moon use it as a mere excuse to transport child protagonists to a Wonderland. The children in The Green Cat meet the moon and various other astronomical bodies at

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3. (Continued) with perhaps a hint from Charles Kingsley's anima figure in The Water Babies (1863). Both the eyes of Forget-me-not and of Kingsley's figure are too bright for ordinary mortals to look into them. Kingsley's figure is both old and young, as is George MacDonald's Grandmother figure, who appears in various stories the most famous of which are perhaps 'The Golden Key' (1867) and The Princess and the Goblin (1872) and The Princess and Curdie (1882). This magical fairy, both old and young, is reincarnated in the godmother of Mrs Molesworth's The Magic Nuts (1898). She also appears as the fairy in The Ruby Ring (1904), where the heroine, Sybil, has read George MacDonald's 'The Light Princess' (1864). This same fairy had appeared to Sybil's Aunt Judy when she was a girl, and Aunt Judy's story had been told in 'Too Bad' in Mrs Molesworth's Tell Me A Story (1875). However, in 1875 the fairy had not been depicted as both young and old. The Princess and Curdie where George MacDonald's Grandmother had been seen as both young and old was published in between 'Too Bad' and The Ruby Ring. This would indicate that Mrs Molesworth continued to read MacDonald's books as they were published, and adapted various features of his characters for her own purpose. It must be said, however, that Mrs Molesworth's anima figures are pale imitations of MacDonald's, and that she does not transmute what she got from him. For a discussion of the anima figure in Kingsley and MacDonald see Louis MacNeice, Varieties of Parable, op.cit., pp. 76-101 passim. Most of what MacNeice says can be applied to Mrs Molesworth without much alteration.

a party. Prince Prigio's journey is a parody of Astolpho's journey in Ariosto's romance Orlando Furioso.

It is interesting that in the 1870's, four years before The Cuckoo Clock, two of Jules Verne's early science-fiction novels were translated into English: De la Terre à la Lune (1865) and Autour de la Lune were published together as From the Earth to the Moon and a Trip Round It. These works of science-fiction take voyages to the moon in a more serious, 'scientific' spirit. Mrs Molesworth's treatment of Griselda's journey to the moon reflects the current interest in science fiction: the cuckoo gives Griselda information about the moon's diameter and circumference, and talks about the possibility of life there (pp. 176-177).

Not until many years later, when Hugh Lofting wrote Dr Dolittle in the Moon (1928) was there any major attempt to imaginatively depict the moon landscape. Mrs Molesworth's depiction of it as a dark, waveless mysterious sea, and Lofting's description of it as a mysterious landscape seem to be the only treatments of the moon in children's literature which treat it as more than a vehicle for whimsy, and the journey there as more than a frivolous journey to Wonderland.

Perhaps Mrs Molesworth had also read two famous science-fiction accounts of voyages underground: Verne's A Journey to the Centre of the Earth (1864) and Bulwer Lytton's The Coming Race (1871). However, Alice's Wonderland was also underground, and so Griselda's journey to the underground Butterfly-Land need not necessarily derive from science-fiction.

Griselda's fantasy adventures seem to bear some resemblance to those of the romance: the dream, the animal guide, talkative and acerbic, the trip to the moon, the beautiful garden of Butterfly Land, hortus both conclusus and amoenus. However, it seems more just to say

that The Cuckoo Clock contains romance elements rather than that it is a romance, or influenced by any romance, for it lacks certain essential romance characteristics.[1]

So far I have been dealing with various events which are fantasy, but there is also a very important fantasy object in The Cuckoo Clock: the cuckoo itself. It is possible that Mrs Molesworth was influenced in this matter by Hoffmann, and also by her admired Mrs Gatty, of whom she said

> ... the very commonest things and incidents of daily life, the changing seasons, the rain and sunshine, snow and mists, the moss of an old flower-pot, the vegetables in a cottage garden, she invests with a vitality that might make better than a fairy-tale out of the dullest walk or most commonplace surroundings.[2]

Mrs Gatty's Parables from Nature (1855) show her ability to anthropomorphise insects and creatures with great skill. However, I think that a greater influence was Hans Andersen.[3]

In her essay on Andersen, Mrs Molesworth summarised and categorised his work, and commented,

> ... truly to children he may be said to have changed the face of the world, gilding the commonest objects with the brightness of his loving and delicate and humorous fancy, so that, as many could personally testify, a few

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1. Griselda is not superior to her surroundings, she is portrayed in depth, her journeys do not form part of an obvious quest. Of course, occasionally in romance, as in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, there is psychological depiction of character, and in a way, Griselda's is a quest, a search and progress towards coming to terms with herself and her environment, for which there are romance parallels, not least in the Arthurian cycle, the Lancelot story for example. But I would not want to stress these points in connection with Mrs Molesworth.

2. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, 'Juliana Horatia Ewing' (1886), in A.P.G., op.cit., p. 504; see also pp. 503-504.

3. It is worth noting that two of Mrs Molesworth's best Kunstmärchen, 'The Magic Rose', interpolated into An Enchanted Garden (1892), and 'The Unselfish Mermaid', interpolated into The Magic Nuts (1898), appear to be strongly influenced by, if not derived from 'The Little Mermaid', the 'exquisite Undine-like tale' the pathos of which she praised in 'Hans Christian Andersen', op.cit., p. 141.

> shells or pebbles, a broken jug, or a fragment of china, become material enough with which to construct stories ....[1]

Mrs Molesworth is referring to the technique of imbuing inanimate objects with life and feeling, and using them as characters in works of fantasy. She was to use this same technique with great success.

Critics have commented on this, albeit rather gushingly. Here are three comments:

> Marghanita Laski (1950): [The success of The Cuckoo Clock lies in] ... the extraordinarily large number of things it manages to invest with a glamour that lasts long after our memory of why they have this glamour. Take for instance, the cuckoo clock itself. No nursery is properly equipped without a cuckoo clock, and I do not doubt that the very special loving affection we have for cuckoo clocks derives from Mrs Molesworth.[2]

> Anne Thaxter Eaton (1969): [Mrs Molesworth] had a rare power to bring out the enchanting quality of things, something which a child feels and to which he readily responds .... [Eaton lists the objects of The Cuckoo Clock, saying] ... [they] create a gracious atmosphere that becomes part of the child's own experience.[3]

> Marion Lochhead (1977): Mrs Molesworth's particular charm is the way in which she breathes life into inanimate objects — into a piece of furniture, or a tapestry, or a cuckoo clock.[4]

What these critics do not notice is that this had been done before by a greater artist than Mrs Molesworth, and that in using this device,

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1. 'Hans Christian Andersen', op.cit., p. 140. It seems to have been this aspect of Andersen's tales that impressed the Victorians most. Here is a typical attitude:
> "Have you read Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales?" asked Florry of her cousin. "We have. They are charming. He gives everything a proper human being life during the night; toys, furniture, thimbles, needles and all, and some of the tales make you feel as if you must cry. I never tire of the book...."

(Clara Bradford, Ethel's Adventures in the Doll Country, John F. Shaw, London, n.d. (1886), p. 164).

2. Laski, op.cit., p. 68.

3. Eaton, op.cit., p. 174.

4. Lochhead, Marion, The Renaissance of Wonder in Children's Literature, Canongate, Edinburgh, 1977, p. 53.

she was doing nothing new, but developing a technique that had already been used, and of which she was aware.[1]

Generally speaking, when Andersen uses objects as animate characters, he makes them the centre of attention. He uses natural objects ('The Fir Tree'), and functional objects ('The Shirt Collar'; 'The Darning Needle'), animals ('The Ugly Duckling', 'The Portuguese Duck') and representational objects or ornaments ('The Constant Tin Soldier', 'The Shepherdess and the Sweep') around which to weave his stories.[2] Mrs Molesworth never makes the objects the central focus of the story, her protagonists are always human, and she imbues only one class of objects with life: representational objects or ornaments. Andersen makes his objects live, but they retain the qualities of the material from which they were made. The Constant Tin Soldier lives and loves, and the constraint which tin places upon his aspirations serves as a metaphor for human constraints and restrictions. With Mrs Molesworth, the representational objects come alive, and retain little of the nature of the materials from which they were made.

In none of Andersen's stories is it suggested that the animate objects are animate only in the mistaken perceptions of the human characters in the tale, though a good deal of 'The Constant Tin Soldier' depends on the reader noticing that the movements of the objects are not a result of any life within them. In The Cuckoo Clock it is suggested that the cuckoo only lives in the eyes of its child observers. To do this, Mrs Molesworth does something that Andersen never does:

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1. And, of course, there were stray instances of the live object in the Märchen, but these are few and far between, such as the harp in 'Jack and the Beanstalk', or the talking loaves and apples in the German 'Mother Holle', but these could not really be said to have personalities.

2. See Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales, tr. Mrs H.B. Paull, Frederick Warne, London etc., n.d. (1867), the edition recommended by Mrs Molesworth in 'Hans Christian Andersen', op.cit., p. 138.

she builds up a mystique round the clock, so that the suspension of physical law is carefully prepared for. The clock is old; made with love by Sybilla's grandfather (p. 83), like 'a part of Sybilla' (p. 43), treated with love by the Misses Grizzel and Tabitha, Griselda's great-aunts. The choice of a cuckoo clock as housing an object imbued with life is itself a happy one, for the image has a power about it. As C.J. Finney, a modern fantasy writer, remarks, the last satyr could tell how

> the encroachment of the hostile Christian deity drove him and his kind out of the Hellenic hills to seek refuge in unamiable lands. How some relatives went north into Europe to become strange gods, like Adonis becoming Balder or Circe becoming one of the Lorelei, or the Lares Domestici becoming cuckoo clocks and mantel statuettes.[1]

The cuckoo clock, a household god in the house of Misses Grizzel and Tabitha, retains something of the primitive mana about it.

The cuckoo retains something of his mechanical function even after he begins to start talking to Griselda. He interrupts their second conversation to call out the hours (pp. 47, 56). He eats nothing at the feasts (p. 70). This mechanical nature is gradually (and purposely) lost sight of. On her last journey, Griselda puts her arm around his 'nice, comfortable, feathery neck ... so soft ...! (p. 159). And at the very end of the narrative, to round it off, he dwindles back again into an object, 'only a cuckoo in a clock' (p. 196).

The old and cherished mandarin dolls are also objects that come alive for Griselda. Again, Miss Grizzel implies to Griselda that they are alive and have feelings (p. 12). These objects are fashioned with care, loved by generations of children, cherished by adults. They come alive; Mrs Molesworth seems to be implying that age, art, love

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1. Finney, C.G., The Circus of Dr Lao (1935), Viking Press, New York, 1961, pp. 45-47.

and imagination can turn objects of fine craftsmanship into something more than inanimate objects. To my knowledge, there is only one other contemporary book, an Alice imitation, which takes up this theme: Charles Leland's Johnnykin and the Goblins, published in the same year as The Cuckoo Clock. This would indicate that Mrs Molesworth was capable of taking from a master and using a technique for an original purpose.[1]

The object which comes alive, usually in a dream, was to become part of the Molesworth formula as well. In The Carved Lions, a successful novel, Geraldine, like Griselda, gives representational objects, the carved lions, so much affection that at last they appear to respond. Several very perfunctory short stories too are built around the device of the object that comes alive: 'The Chintz Curtains' (Hoodie), 'Robin's Remonstrance: Times Change' ('My Pretty'), 'The Weather Maiden' (Fairies Afield). These are very sketchily presented objects, through the operations of which the child can conveniently enter a Wonderland.

This technique degenerated into presenting fictional children with not live objects, but inanimate ones, as convenient passports to Wonderland: magic nuts (The Magic Nuts) or a ruby ring (The Ruby Ring). By Mrs Molesworth's last book, Fairies Afield, the objects have become more like machinery: enchanted lifts, tables, vases, umbrellas, barometers, trunks, etc.

In adapting Andersen's technique, Mrs Molesworth probably gave an indirect impetus to another fantasy convention: live toys. Margaret Blount points out that stories about toys that 'come to life'

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1. An interesting modern use of this same theme occurs in Pauline Clarke's The Twelve and the Genii (1963) where the twelve soldiers, loved by the Brontës, come to life again for a modern little boy who loves them.

'do not date back much before the Victorian Age and the time when childhood began to be considered in isolation and regarded in sentimental or romantic fashion'.[1] In her account, the examples of this convention in England are all later than The Cuckoo Clock. Though the cuckoo and the mandarins are not toys they are sufficiently like them to have influenced later fictions of live toys, a convention that may be said to stem from Andersen, through Mrs Molesworth and others to later writers.

c. Fantasy as Phantasy

Like Alice's fantasy adventures, Griselda's adventures with the cuckoo may be considered to take place in dreams, though this is never explicitly stated.[2] Dreams in real life are phantasies of the unconscious mind. The neo-Freudian Susan Isaacs defines phantasy thus:

> Phantasy is (in the first instance) the mental corollary, the psychic representative of instinct. There is no impulse ... which is not experienced as unconscious phantasy .... A phantasy represents the particular content of the urges or feelings (for example, wishes, fears, anxieties, triumphs, love or sorrow) dominating the mind at the moment.[3]

The dream-convention in literature, however, generally serves as a device by which allegorical or fantasy adventures may be begun, not as a psychological exploration of the dreamer in the modern sense of the phrase. Unless I am mistaken, Mrs Molesworth is the first writer for children to explore the phantasies of a child protagonist, using the dream-convention as a starting point. The Cuckoo Clock is a fantasy, a literary work, about phantasy, a mental act, and I suggest

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1. Blount, Margaret, Animal Land: The Creatures of Children's Fiction, Hutchinson, London, 1974, p. 170.

2. See Townsend, op.cit., p. 71.

3. Isaacs, Susan, quoted in Melanie Klein, Our Adult World and its Roots in Infancy, Tavistock, London, 1959, p. 6.

that it is here that Mrs Molesworth made her distinctive contribution to the fantasy novel for children, in exploring the mental and psychological needs of a fictional child, and how it copes with these. I do not wish to be overly anachronistic, so I do not go into the subtleties of post-Freudian accounts of the 'dream mechanism', but take the simple, and I hope commonsensical approach that in a fairly obvious way, dreams reflect the external circumstances of the dreamer, and also his deprivations, longings and wishes, whether by fulfilling them or by reflecting them — as Shakespeare saw in the Queen Mab speech in Romeo and Juliet.

Dreams reflect the external circumstances of the waking lives of dreamers. Carroll had indicated a general connection between the waking life of Alice and her dreams: at the end, in her sister's musings, it is revealed that the sounds of the farmyard around Alice became the characters in Wonderland. Later imitators, even after Mrs Molesworth, made the same sort of general connection between the dreamer's environment and the dream. In Wanted A King (1890), for instance, Merle goes to sleep watching a screen painted with nursery rhyme characters.[1] When she dreams, she dreams of them. But it must be stressed that in Alice and the Alice imitations, the dream is not used as a reflection of the emotional needs of the dreamer or a reflection of her personality. When Edmund Wilson says that 'The creatures she meets, the whole dream, are Alice's personality and her waking life',[2] he is taking a liberty with the text for there is no warrant in the book, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, to indicate that such is the case. The mouse in Alice may be the real-life Alice Liddell's governess Miss Prickett, and the attack on Alice by the cards

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1. Browne, Maggie, Wanted — a King; or How Merle set the nursery rhymes to rights, Cassell, London, 1890.

2. Wilson, Edmund, The Shores of Light (1952), Noonday Press, New York, 1967, p. 543.

may represent the fictional Alice's dream reflection of the adults in her hypothetical waking life, but both conjectures having nothing to do with the text of Alice itself.[1]

Mrs Molesworth lets drop many hints that Griselda's fantasy adventures have curious parallels with her waking life, and as such indicates that they are meant to be taken as dreams. Miss Grizzel shows Griselda the mandarin figurines (p. 12), so Griselda dreams of the mandarins. In her dream she mentions to the cuckoo that the palanquin she rides in is exactly the same as the one she has seen in her godmother's house (p. 63), and the hint is clear. In the same way Miss Grizzel and Dorcas refer continually to the resemblance between Griselda and her grandmother Sybilla: and Griselda has a dream vision of Sybilla. When she first sees the great saloon the thought crosses her waking mind that there must have been many balls held there, and later, the cuckoo gives her a vision of Sybilla at one of them. In a fit of pique, she wishes to be a butterfly, and the cuckoo takes her to Butterfly Land. There the air-dance that she sees recalls to her mind '"those twisty-twirly dissolving views that papa took me to see once"' (p. 125). Prior to her last journey, she desires intensely to see Phil, so the cuckoo takes her to see him. In the same episode, she goes to the moon, and while there, remarks to the cuckoo that the information he persists in giving her is very like her astronomy lesson of the day before. Both in the depictions of what is indisputably Griselda's waking life, and of her fantasy

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1. Hence, when Phyllis Greenacre analyses Alice, and arrives at the conclusion that it is full of symbols of oral aggression, and is the expression of an Oedipus complex, it is not the psychological state of the character of Alice, that she is analysing, it is the state of Alice's creator (Swift and Carroll, International Universities Press, New York, 1955). Presumably one could derive a theory of the psychological state of a figure in literature who dreams from the dream itself, but if no clues at all were given in the text as to the waking life and influences acting upon the dreamer, this would be as ridiculous as inventing notions about the girlhood of Shakespeare's heroines.

adventures, the connections are suggested.

The fantasy short story 'The Blue Dwarfs' in Mrs Molesworth's A Christmas Posy (1888), which foreshadowed the adventures with the gnomes in the novel The Magic Nuts (1898), depicts fairly skilfully the connection between the fantasy adventures of the protagonists and their waking lives. However, unlike The Cuckoo Clock, the fantasy short story has the protagonists realising, after the adventure is over, that it was part of a dream.

When Mrs Molesworth used the fantasy novel as a means of going deeper in exploring the child's unconscious mind, she was bringing into literature for children a preoccupation that was recognised in the adult literature of the time. Nancy Mann pointed out in her study of George MacDonald, that as inheritors of the Romantic tradition, the Victorians partook of that Romantic spirit characterised by 'an intense desire for a spiritual contact with the "other", the non-ego', and that two important objects of this desire were God and Nature.[1]

> The third important object ... lies within the human mind itself, in what we now call the unconscious. The Romantics demonstrate by their interest in drugs, dream and trance states that they wish to establish contact with the unconscious, but the explicit formulation of esthetic theories which recognise this desire is more a Victorian than an early nineteenth century product.[2]

In her use of the dream as the child's unconscious phantasy Mrs Molesworth may have been influenced by Dickens's use of the dream in a similar way. Dick, in Oliver Twist, an orphaned deprived child, is dying, and his dreams reflect his feelings. So he sees Heaven and angels and kind faces which he never sees when he is awake (Chapter 7). In the same way Paul Dombey tells his father of the curious dreams

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1. Mann, op.cit., p. 21.

2. Ibid., pp. 23-24.

that he has at night, though he does not elaborate on their nature (Dombey and Son, Chapter 8). And Jenny Wren has similar phantasy dreams in which angels come and comfort her (Our Mutual Friend, Chapter 2). Some of Dickens's deprived children thus have dreams which reflect their deprivation and compensate for it, but these dreams are only conventional religious visions, and do not reflect the particular problems of any particular child, and are not central to Dickens's novels.

Dickens's children's book, Holiday Romance (1868), had explored the question of children's phantasies. It consists of a number of stories professedly written by three small children who are introduced by another child in the first chapter. It is clear that these stories are meant to reflect the longings dominating the minds of their child authors. Thus, one boy writes of how his hero vanquished his Latin master, one girl writes about a princess who works hard, and another writes of a society in which children dominate over their parents (a theme also explored in W.B. Rands's Lilliput Levee poems published four years before). But these stories are not dreams, though they are expressions of fictional wish-fulfilment phantasies, and only one of them is a work of fantasy. It is not a serious exploration of phantasy but a set of parodies of the pirate tale, the Kunstmärchen, and the domestic story for children.

I now examine the wishes and longings of Griselda, conscious and partly conscious, which are experienced by her as characters, settings, and incidents, and which take on objective form in the novel.

The prime deprivation in Griselda's life is that she has lost her mother. Walter Houghton comments on the importance the figure of the mother had assumed in Victorian times:

> ... of all women in the world, the most pure — and the most useful as a sanction for adolescent chastity — was Mother .... In that way filial love, already increased in the Victorian family by the repression of sexual emotions, was exaggerated in the cause of moral censorship and control.[1]

Phyllis Reinstein makes the point that Victorian mothers in books were loving, helpful, and all-wise, and that often, 'the unfortunate result of idealising mother is that she becomes unbearably boring to live with and has to be killed off before any fun can start'.[2]

Mrs Molesworth does not misuse the potentialities for sentimentality of Griselda's motherless condition. Nevertheless, it is made quite clear that Griselda misses her mother deeply. Phil, the little boy whom she meets late in the book who is also motherless, though only temporarily, describes to her his devotion for his mother. He says '"I won't never leave off having a mother, anyway"' (p. 138), and that his mother '"is just as good as — as good as — as good as good. That's what she is"' (p. 142). Griselda 'sadly' tells him of her own bereavement (p. 138). At the end of the book, when Phil and his mother meet and embrace

> Griselda drew back into the shadow of the doorway, and tears filled her eyes as for a minute or two she listened to the cooings and caressings of the mother and son.
> (p. 193)

These touches are enough to make clear the extent of Griselda's longing for a mother.

Griselda's dreams provide her with the cuckoo, a mother-surrogate. He shows his affection for her by giving her what she wants. He

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1. Houghton, Walter, The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870 (1957), Yale U.P., New Haven etc., 1975, p. 355.

2. Reinstein, Phyllis Gila, Alice in Context: A Study of Children's Literature in the Dominant Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, Yale University Ph.D. thesis, 1972, p. 89.

considers her problems (p. 36), suggests playing games with her (p. 53), suggests as well her various fantasy adventures (pp. 54, 79, 111, 158, 171). He looks after her on her adventures, keeping her warm (p. 52), anticipating her need for warmth (p. 167), supervising her clothing and even providing a mirror for her (pp. 65, 118-120), protecting her (p. 126), explaining things to her (pp. 67, 79, 112-18, 121-26, 166-177). He is like the loving, helpful, all-wise mother mentioned by Reinstein, providing for Griselda the mother she has lost and for whom it can be assumed she longs.

The helpful cuckoo, Griselda's mother-substitute, resembles a figure that appears again and again in folklore.[1] It is illuminating to consider the comments that Jung made about helpful animals in folk fairy tales.[2] Jung says that in folk fairy tales, the archetype of the Wise Old Man appears to the hero when he is in a hopeless situation from which only profound reflection or a lucky idea can extricate him. The knowledge needed to compensate for this deficiency comes in the form of personified thought, that is, in the shape of this sagacious and helpful old man. This figure sums up the situation, then the assets of the personality, and then gives information that will help the hero. He represents knowledge, reflection, insight, wisdom, cleverness and intuition, and moral qualities such as goodwill and

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1. Thompson, Stith, Motif-Index of Folk Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements ..., 6 vols, Rosenkilde and Bagger, Copenhagen, 1955 (rev. ed.): the helpful cuckoo is Motif B 469.9, the magic bird is B 172, the speaking bird is B 211.3, the helpful bird is B 450, the bird as adviser is B 122.1; the marvellous journeys, persons and places would find a place in Motif Group F. Helpful animals had appeared in Alice (if the Cheshire cat, Mock Turtle and Gryphon can be counted as helpful), and in an early Alice imitation, Christina Rossetti's Speaking Likenesses (1874), but these animals have no personalities of their own as the cuckoo does.

2. Jung, C.G., The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (1959), tr. R.F.C. Hull, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1968 (2nd ed.), pp. 217-230; see also Luthi, op.cit., pp. 61, 70; Rosemary Haughton, Tales from Eternity: The World of Faerie and the Spiritual Search, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1973, p. 52.

readiness to help. Sometimes he appears in a dream within the fairy tale. The helpful old man often makes use of animals, particularly birds, and sometimes is theriomorphised and appears as a talking animal, which implies no devaluation, only that he is outside or above the human level. It is possible that Mrs Molesworth was influenced, in her presentation of the cuckoo as the dream symbol of Griselda's mother, by her knowledge of fairy tales. One that would have been available to her was the Grimm version of Cinderella (Ashputtel) in which a little bird advises Cinderella what to do. But what is more interesting is that Jung's analysis of this helpful animal-figure in the fairy tale fits so exactly the figure of the cuckoo as mother-surrogate in this fantasy novel. Griselda has no way out of her deprivation when the cuckoo appears. He represents all the qualities that Jung attributes to the Wise Old Man archetype. He is a bird. This would indicate the connection, albeit at a sub-conscious level, between Mrs Molesworth's latter-day fantasy novel and its traditional ancestor, the traditional folk fairy tale.

In making the cuckoo serve as a mother-surrogate for Griselda, Mrs Molesworth did not make the cuckoo a mother-figure and nothing more. He is endowed with a personality of his own. He has magic powers, and can change his size at will, but in addition he has all the attributes of a cantankerous adult like the hectoring animals in Alice. It is these attributes which overshadow his 'motherly qualities', and which were to make him the model for many magic animals in subsequent fantasy novels. The cuckoo is conceited, he constantly emphasises his own superiority to Griselda. One of his favourite shibboleths is 'You have a great deal to learn', which he constantly directs at Griselda (pp. 48, 49, 53, 54, 58, 62, 108). He calls her silly (p. 180), and a goose (p. 63). He imparts a great deal of his information in a hectoring manner (p. 54). He is

'patronising' (p. 59). He is sarcastic (pp. 103-104). He has a dry manner of speaking. When Griselda tells him that part of her trouble is that her great-aunts have '"got out of children's ways"' he replies: '"About time they did"' (p. 36). He tends to talk in a manner calculated to discomfit her, by deliberately misunderstanding what she says. When Griselda asks him if he has come back for good he replies '"Certainly not for evil"' (p. 37). He tends to curb both Griselda's excesses of happiness and sorrow. When she hugs him tightly in gratitude, he asks her not to throttle him (p. 161). When she gives way to despair, he says tartly, '"It really is extraordinary how some people make troubles out of nothing!"' (p. 158). He is irritating in his pedantry and insistence that Griselda be particular that she say exactly what she means (pp. 47, 48, 121, 167).

Jung said that every archetype had both a positive and a negative side.[1] The positive side of the cuckoo as Wise Old Man is seen in his function as mother-surrogate, the negative side in his role as cantankerous adult. Yet even the cuckoo's irritatingly superior qualities express his concern for Griselda, while at the same time making him vivid and interesting. Mrs Molesworth's 'fairy godmother figures' who serve the same function as mother-surrogates in other books, are pale and uninteresting in comparison with the cuckoo, though they share his magical qualities, because they lack any hint of a colourful personality. Marcelline and the godmother of The Tapestry Room, who appear in addition to Dudu the raven, the Doctor and godmother of Christmas Tree Land, Mrs Caretaker in An Enchanted Garden, the applewoman-godmother of The Magic Nuts, the godmother-angel of The Ruby Ring — they fade into insignificance beside the cuckoo.

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1. Jung, op.cit., p. 226.

Perhaps this is because they are human, and Mrs Molesworth did not feel she could portray any responsible and sympathetic adult as having qualities both irritating and ridiculous. With the cuckoo, a bird, she could afford more freedom.

Yet, though Mrs Molesworth's own 'godmothers' are pallid, the cuckoo as a benevolent, but cantankerous magical figure had been preceded by certain anthropomorphic fairy godmothers in other classic fantasy works for children. The godmother in Mrs Craik's The Little Lame Prince (1875) is gravely benevolent in her human aspect, but shrewish, conceited and sharp-tongued when she appears as a bird. The fairies Abracadabra in The Hope of the Katzekopfs (1844) and Blackstick in The Rose and the Ring (1855) are also benevolent, but again they are short-tempered and acid-tongued: they are cantankerous adults. The latter are in fact composite figures — their 'gifts' and behaviour resemble those of the traditional evil fairy at royal christenings, but they wish only good to their mortal protegés, though this the humans are too foolish to realise.[1]

The cuckoo can thus be seen as occupying a medial point in the development of the motif of the cantankerous yet benevolent fairy in fantasy fiction for children. He relates the fantasy novel to two kinds of Kunstmärchen which predate Alice and the fantasy novel proper: the allegorical Kunstmärchen and the burlesque Kunstmärchen. The Little Lame Prince stands in the line of Rev. Macleod's The Golden Thread (1861) and was one of the last allegorical Kunstmärchen of any importance, for this mode almost completely died out by the end of the

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1. Dudu the Raven in The Tapestry Room is such a composite figure: the children fear that he is an evil enchanter, but he, like the cuckoo, is their protector. There is another kind of composite figure in fantasy fiction of the period — the fairy godmother who appears good but is actually evil. The most fearsome examples are perhaps Fairy Malice in Mark Lemon's The Enchanted Doll (1849) and the unnamed girl in Mrs W.K. Clifford's 'The New Mother' in Anyhow Stories: Moral and Otherwise (1882).

nineteenth century. The burlesque tradition of The Rose and the Ring of course, continues to develop even today.

If the figure of the cuckoo harks back to a tradition, it also foreshadows a certain development in the fantasy novel. Mrs Molesworth was the first to hit upon what was to become a standard figure in later fantasy novels: the cantankerous, yet benevolent magic creature, who appears in books where often the children are not deprived, but merely bored, and where they do have loving mothers in the background. In other words, the negative side of the Wise Old Man archetype, as portrayed by Mrs Molesworth, was to exert a continuing influence on fantasy novels. Margaret Blount, in talking about mythical beasts and magic in children's fiction, mentions the cuckoo at the head of her list of talking animals in fantasy novels for children. At the end of her discussion she mentions 'the usual magic animal attributes — conceit, near-perfect knowledge of worldly affairs, long memory, good education and kindly concern for ... his special friend'.[1] The traditional helpful animals of folk tale are not the source of this figure, nor is the traditional fabulous animal like the unicorn or the griffin. Generally critics of children's literature compare such creatures with E. Nesbit's Psammead.[2] But E. Nesbit, though she was the first to create a fabulous animal with a personality of its own, derived the personality of her fabulous creature from Mrs Molesworth's non-fabulous, but magic, wooden cuckoo. This throws a light on the connection between Andersen and Nesbit. Andersen endowed objects with life, Mrs Molesworth endowed a wooden animal with life in the dreams of her

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1. Blount, op.cit., p. 114.

2. See for example Elaine Moss on Mary Steele's Because of the Sand Witches There, Children's Books of the Year 1976, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1977, p. 52.

protagonists, and E. Nesbit took over the wooden animal's personality for her own original fabulous creature.

In refining a motif which existed in folklore, and tailoring it to the special needs of her protagonist, Mrs Molesworth was to be a potent influence on fantasy novels to come. She seems not to have realised the potential of what she had hit upon. Dudu the raven in The Tapestry Room, the robin of 'Robin's Remonstrance', the bird in the 'Story of Letty' (The Boys and I), and the wood-pigeons of The Wood-pigeons and Mary, though they all take their young charges to various Wonderlands which include gardens, lack the vividness of characterisation which distinguishes the cuckoo, while retaining a faint hint of his tart manner.

Griselda does not talk about her deepest deprivation to the cuckoo, but she does tell him of her main problems: the lack of a playfellow, and the lack of any play or recreation. She has left behind her, in her home overseas, 'a troop of noisy merry brothers' (pp. 17, 31, 136). At first she finds her new life neither boring nor solitary, but it begins to pall. Her loneliness is mentioned several times, whether in dialogue, or in description (pp. 36, 77-78, 98, 131). When she meets Phil, 'it was months since she had spoken to a child, almost since she had seen one ...' (p. 136). Her recreation is hedged round with restrictions about what she must not do (pp. 12, 130), and limited to reading a few books, an occasional 'long, weary drive' (p. 77) or smelling flowers and walking in the garden (p. 131).

Griselda stresses her plight emphatically, though without self-pity, in one key passage:

> "You must come in now, little missie," said Dorcas's voice. "Miss Grizzel says you have had play enough, and there's a nice fire in the ante-room for you to do your lessons by."

> "Play!" repeated Griselda indignantly as she turned to follow the old servant. "Do you call walking up and down the terrace 'play', Dorcas? I mustn't loiter even to pick a flower, if there were any, for fear of catching cold, and I mustn't run for fear of overheating myself. I declare, Dorcas, if I don't have some play soon, or something to amuse me, I think I'll run away."
>
> (pp. 41-42)

Griselda's feelings are sympathised with by the cuckoo, who takes her point (pp. 36, 48). Phil too has nothing else to play with but flowers (p. 144), and he is pathetically anxious to have Griselda as a live playfellow (pp. 140, 144).

The cuckoo is Griselda's playfellow and Phil's too (p. 140), and the very first night she hears his call it is with 'a pleasant feeling of companionship' (p. 7). He is several times referred to as Griselda's 'friend' (pp. 15, 38, 49, 71, 196).

The loneliness, lack of recreation and vent for energy of Griselda's waking life are in sharp contrast to Griselda's Wonderlands in which there are dances (pp. 64, 85, 125), songs (pp. 71, 79, 86) and festive occasions including feasts (pp. 64, 83, 118), which Griselda participates in or watches. They do not appear arbitrarily, but as unconscious channels for her pent-up energy, and desire for companionship and harmony.

Marghanita Laski recognised that this element of festivity, which she called 'the feast prepared by the dignified and frightening hosts',[1] became part of the Molesworth formula. However she does not point out the reason for this element, though she does seem to have an inkling of the truth when she remarks that Mrs Molesworth's 'own notion of magic imagery was singularly consistent throughout her books and would probably be illuminating to a psychiatrist'.[2] By regarding the elements

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1. Laski, op.cit., p. 68.

2. Ibid.

in the fantasy adventures as part of Mrs Molesworth's phantasies, however, Mrs Laski misses the point: they are part of the phantasy of the protagonist, not the author.

Griselda lives a very physically circumscribed life. She is indoors for the first two-thirds of the book for it is winter; she is cooped up (pp. 42,130), 'obliged to restrain herself and move demurely' (p. 24). She longs for a magic carpet (p. 41), and her physical restrictions are compensated for in her dreams: she is taken to strange new places,[1] can fly,[2] on occasion aided by the cuckoo's feather cloak.[3] Her most exhilarating flight is on her last journey:

> Had ever a little girl such a flight before? Floating, darting, gliding, sailing .... Griselda lay still with delight, gazing all about her.
>
> (p. 167)

And there are many passages describing these flights which release her from the seclusion of her aunts' old house.

As with The Cuckoo Clock, in Mrs Molesworth's next fantasy novel, The Tapestry Room, the children cannot go out of the château, for it is winter. They compensate for their circumscribed lives in their dream fantasy adventures. The same could be said of The Children of the Castle who are physically constricted, not by weather, but by their lonely environment, miles from society. In The Magic Nuts, the children are again imprisoned in the castle by snow, and their compensation lies in the story told by their fairy godmother. The children of The Enchanted Garden seek the physical isolation of the

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1. The goblin mines which Griselda says she would like to visit (p. 56) but does not visit in the course of the story were visited 21 years later by Leonora and Hildegarde in The Magic Nuts (1898).

2. Laski calls this 'component' of Mrs Molesworth's unvarying 'magic imagery' 'the flight through the sky in the tiny little carriage' (Laski, op.cit., p. 68). She is inaccurate, for the carriage itself appears only in Christmas Tree Land.

3. The magic feather cloak reappears 24 years later in The Woodpigeons and Mary (1901) where it has a different function.

garden to hear the stories of their fairy godmother. All these children, like Griselda, are shut off and enclosed, finding their compensations in fantasy adventures which are sometimes dreams. Elaine Showalter describes The Tapestry Room as a 'fantasy of enclosure', and this apt phrase could be applied to The Cuckoo Clock, and all the fantasy novels mentioned above.[1]

The drabness of Griselda's life is symbolised by her clothes. She enters the book in half-mourning for her mother, all in grey (p. 3), a striking image to be repeated by Mrs Molesworth in her Miss Mouse and her Boys twenty-five years after The Cuckoo Clock. In her dreams she is given a multicoloured cloak, and colourful and gorgeous costumes by the mandarins (p. 66) and butterflies (p. 119). These costumes, as well as those worn by the vision of the child Sybilla (Griselda's grandmother) are described in loving detail.

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1. Showalter, Elaine, A Literature of Their Own (1977), Virago, London, 1978, p. 33. However, Miss Showalter sees The Tapestry Room as an example of the feminist writing of withdrawal, psychologically focused, seeking refuge from the harsh realities and vicious practices of the male world, having as its symbol the enclosed space, more especially the enclosed room. This is a distortion of The Tapestry Room, Mrs Molesworth's other fantasy novels, and also Mrs Craik's The Little Lame Prince, which Miss Showalter mentions as another fantasy of enclosure by a children's writer. The enclosure in these novels, with the exception of The Enchanted Garden, is not a refuge from harsh realities, but an imprisonment by circumstances. This imprisonment is made bearable by fantasy adventures which provide temporary release. Some of these books (including The Little Lame Prince) in fact depict the physical release of the children from their enclosure.

Again, with The Tapestry Room as the others, it is odd to speak of these enclosures as a refuge from the male world, since some of these enclosures are occupied by males: Hugo in The Tapestry Room, Bertram in The Children of the Castle, Rofe in The Enchanted Garden, Dolor in The Little Lame Prince. In the case of Griselda, she gets out of the enclosed house herself, but she gets out of the larger enclosure of the garden with the help of a little boy.

Miss Showalter's book has attracted much attention, so I must point out that it is unreliable when it comes to children's books. It gets the date of The Little Lame Prince wrong, it has a cavalier attitude to Mrs Molesworth. It implies that she consistently used the pseudonym (incorrectly thought to be male) which she rejected very early in her career (p. 58); it refers to her as Mary Molesworth rather than Louisa Molesworth as she was known (p. 58); it mistakes Louisa for Louise (p. 334). It states that Mrs Molesworth was a Calvinist (p. 334) which she was not (see B.H.M., op.cit., p. 24); and says that she divorced her husband (p. 334) which is incorrect (see B.H.M., op.cit., p. 38).

Mrs Laski calls the long passage in which the butterflies dress Griselda 'the most dearly remembered passage in any children's book', while criticising Mrs Molesworth's choice of colours.[1] Again, she appears to miss the point that Mrs Molesworth is saying what Griselda's taste might well have been, rather than expressing her own. Mrs Molesworth and her creation appear to remain unseparated in Mrs Laski's view.

Griselda is the most junior and, though she is not neglected, the least important member of her world. This too is changed in her dreams. Her wish is the cuckoo's command. When she goes to the Country of Nodding Mandarins the mandarin guards and bearers treat her with extreme deference, she is the recipient of a long and extended royal salute (p. 66). She is honoured by 'the gravest and grandest personage she had yet seen' who asks her to dance (p. 67). In Butterfly Land special royal messengers invite her to a banquet in honour of her visit (p. 118), butterfly royalty settle on her hands, and a special entertainment is put on for her (p. 125). Hence, Griselda is the centre of importance wherever she goes in her dreams, in direct contrast to her position in her daily life.

In addition to making clear the connections between these aspects of Griselda's waking life and her dream-phantasies, Mrs Molesworth also built up another set of circumstances which make it obvious why Griselda should dream in the manner she does.

The Cuckoo Clock is so constructed as to indicate clearly the psychological connection between Griselda's waking life and her dreams. Having seen the clock and heard Miss Grizzel's hints that the cuckoo is alive (p. 9), one day in a fit of temper with her lessons, Griselda throws the book at the clock. She begins to feel guilty, the maid Dorcas talks (then and later) about her belief in the fairy nature of

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1. Laski, op.cit., p. 66.

the clock (pp. 28, 43), and Griselda's guilt is heightened over a period of time (pp. 20-30). She cannot immediately see whether her action has damaged the clock. In the evening, as she stands before it, she seems to hear a faint call. That night she has troubled dreams — 'only fancy' (p. 26) — of the cuckoo. The next day the clock is out of order, Miss Grizzel is discomposed, Miss Tabitha cries, Dorcas talks gloomily about great trouble. Given Griselda's initial guilt, and the subsequent furore in the house, it is psychologically in order that that night she dreams of the cuckoo whom she thinks she has injured, and from then onwards has found an object onto which she can project the unconscious phantasy-compensations for her deprived life.

This is all the more appropriate since, as Mrs Molesworth gradually establishes, Griselda is given to conscious phantasising: her imagination naturally runs along the lines it does in her dreams. Griselda day-dreams. After the cuckoo shows her Sybilla, she

> ... sat still contentedly enough, thinking over what she had seen, and trying to make more "pictures" for herself in the fire.
>
> (p. 87)

In the garden in summer, bored:

> She used to sit there and fancy — fancy that she heard the wood-elves chattering under their breath, or the little underground gnomes and kobolds hammering at their fairy forges. And the tinkling of the brook sounded like the enchanted bells round the necks of the fairy-kine, who are sent out to pasture sometimes on the upper world hill-sides.
>
> (p. 132)

Out of Griselda's own psyche, then, grow the unconscious phantasies which seek to provide a temporary resolution to the psychological problems that beset her. In both psychological and artistic terms it is appropriate that when these problems are resolved more permanently, the phantasies are no longer required, and Griselda's dreams end, bringing to an end the fantasy adventures, and the book (pp. 195-196).

Mrs Molesworth appears to have been perfectly aware of what she was doing in using the dream not merely as a literary device, but as a pointer to the psychology of the child and hence as an indication of how the child should be treated. She never made this point in any of her essays, but one of her very earliest stories, 'The Reel Fairies', is The Cuckoo Clock in little, and the point is made there.[1]

Louisa, the heroine of 'The Reel Fairies', is a nondescript lonely little girl, who weaves stories round objects — the reels in her mother's work box. A pretty little girl comes to visit who affects to pity Louisa for her paucity of toys, for she herself has pretty dolls and a beautiful 'princess' dress. That night the reels come alive, take Louisa off to be their queen (much in the manner of the shadows in George MacDonald's 'The Shadows'). She shrinks in size, they turn on her, she screams, and wakes. The next day she tells her mother of her dream:

> So bit by bit Louisa explained the whole, and her mamma had a peep into that strange, fantastic, mysterious world, which we call a child's imagination. She had a glimpse of something else too. She saw that her little girl was in danger of getting to live too much alone, was in need of sympathy and companionship.[2]

Louisa realises that the little girl's words and her own longings had made her dream in the way she did. Her mother resolves to provide more and better play and reassures her of her love.

All the essential elements of The Cuckoo Clock can be discerned in this short story. Because it was written when Mrs Molesworth was still a novice at the writing of fiction, it is far less subtle than the later novel. The Cuckoo Clock does not have Griselda realising the origins of her dreams, that her fantasy adventures are phantasies,

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1. See also p. 141 of this thesis.

2. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, Tell Me A Story (1875), Macmillan, London, 1891, p. 38.

nor does any adult character like Louisa's mother spell out the message about the deprived child in so many words. Yet the short story makes clear that the intention behind the novel was not to write an Alice imitation, but to write a fantasy novel about phantasy, thereby making a point about the upbringing of children.

Through the presentation of the phantasies of the deprived child, Mrs Molesworth gives an account of all the things she thinks are necessary for the well-being of children: comfort and good food, loving parents, friends, play, physical freedom, bright clothes, a degree of importance. The novel can be seen as the fictional rendering of Mrs Molesworth's theories about child welfare. In 1900, Isabel Robson remarked of Tell Me A Story, the collection in which 'The Reel Fairies' appeared, that

> ... whilst Mrs Molesworth writes especially for the child, her books convey many a hint to its parents. To them her message is often couched in a single word — "love", love always, love much, be strict, but not too strict.[1]

Mrs Molesworth was in her day very active in charity work, and the title of one of her factual articles on the work done for waifs and strays in the East End is in a way emblematic of the attitude that appears to lie behind The Cuckoo Clock. The article is entitled 'For the Little Ones — "Food, Fun, and Fresh Air"'. The drift of the message of much of her fiction appears to be that, if the child is given these, he will not be deprived in any important sense, and as it were, will not need to have dream-phantasies.

Through the years, Mrs Molesworth often stressed the importance of the dreams of her fictional characters in her non-fantasy novels. In her fantasy novels, the dreams and fantasy adventures tend to be

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1. Robson, op.cit., p. 1. See also Salmon, op.cit., p. 61, for virtually the same point made some years earlier. Adults did read Mrs Molesworth's children's books. See also pp. 6-7 of this thesis.

wish-fulfilment phantasies, but her non-fantasy novels tend to deal with both wish-fulfilment or therapeutic dreams as well as with premonitory dreams.

On the whole, I think that The Carved Lions (1895), 'which some think one of the greatest stories of all children's literature',[1] is the best example of the first sort of non-fantasy novel. Here, Geraldine, with her parents and brother far away, misunderstood by her teachers, runs away and goes to sleep, pillowing her head upon the familiar and loved carved lions outside the grocer's shop. The objects seem to come alive, and provide what she most wants, a trip to her parents. Mrs Laski thinks the book flawed by Mrs Molesworth's inclusion of this 'magical episode', 'clearly' meant to be taken as '"really happening"', even while the loophole is left that 'the flight on the lion's back might have been a dream'.[2] My view of this novel is somewhat different. I think that in The Carved Lions Mrs Molesworth combined the conventions of the deprived child and the live object as she had done in The Cuckoo Clock. She also here demonstrated her interest in the wish-fulfilling and therapeutic functions of phantasy as dream. This is not to say that the book is a fantasy novel in which the fantasy may be seen as the protagonist's phantasy; but to say that it is a novel which includes an account of the dream-phantasy of the protagonist. I think that there are certain definite indications, far less ambiguous than the corresponding ones in The Cuckoo Clock, that tell the reader unmistakably that, dream-phantasy episode notwithstanding, The Carved Lions is not a fantasy novel of the order of The Cuckoo Clock. These indications are the fact that there is only one such episode; its phantasmagoric and fragmentary nature, blending

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1. Ellis, How to Find Out About Children's Literature, op.cit., p. 122.

2. Laski, op.cit., p. 70.

into nightmare, which contrasts with the order of The Cuckoo Clock's fantasy adventures; the fact that it is far more obviously a wish-fulfilment than Griselda's adventures; that it seems to be part of the delirium of Geraldine's illness, an account of which follows immediately after; and that while Griselda explicitly believes that her fantasy adventures are not dreams, the attitude of Geraldine is left unstated. Fantasy novel or not, The Carved Lions, like The Cuckoo Clock, is to some extent a novel about dream-phantasy, and as such shows as clearly one of the ways in which Mrs Molesworth added a psychological depth to her fiction.

In the same way, in The Oriel Window (1896), Mrs Molesworth showed the crippled boy Ferdy given strength and sustenance by his dream of the comforting swallows; elsewhere she showed how the imaginative girl, Sylvia, (Grandmother Dear, 1878), aware that her brother is cleverer than herself, can still experience history in a dream in a way in which he cannot.

The novels which deal with premonitory dreams use them more as a plot-device to foreshadow what will happen and to add an air of mystery, than as a preoccupation or means of psychological characterisation. The Old Pincushion (1889), for example, has Philippa dreaming of the hiding-place of the missing will, and in the same way there is an account of a premonitory dream of good luck in Miss Mouse (1900), and in Mrs Molesworth's last novel, The Story of a Year (1910), where Fulvia dreams of her father's return and the regained good fortune of the family before these things occur. In The Girls and I (1892), one of Mrs Molesworth's most interesting novels, which deals with coincidence and causation, a dream sets off a train of events that leads to the recovery of a very valuable lost object.

Mrs Molesworth never quite repeated her success with The Cuckoo Clock in her other fantasy novels. In these, the connection between

the phantasies of the deprived child and the fantasy adventures is somewhat attenuated. Rather than explore the fairylands created by the child's dream-phantasies, Mrs Molesworth tended to multiply characters and objects, fantasy and otherwise, and to pay more attention to 'romantic' external setting than she did in The Cuckoo Clock. Hence we find a French château (The Tapestry Room), a German castle or inn (Christmas Tree Land, The Magic Nuts), a wild moorland farm (Four Winds Farm), and a castle by the sea (The Children of the Castle).

This portion of this thesis has tried to show Mrs Molesworth's interest in and depiction of a certain facet of the psychology of her protagonists. More general questions of characterisation will be dealt with later. In concluding this portion, it may be said that the theme of the phantasies of the deprived child is not the only interesting psychological theme that Mrs Molesworth dealt with. The impression I have gained from reading the greater part of her corpus of over a hundred books is that there are at least five other recurrent ones. These may be roughly characterised as: the wildly badtempered girl (e.g. Rosy); the effeminate boy and the uses of being sissified (e.g. The Girls and I and many others); sibling rivalry and jealousy (e.g. The February Boys); the moral and psychological effects of lack of money in a middle or upper-class family (e.g. Robin Redbreast); and the wayward and independent girl brought to her senses (e.g. White Turrets). These would appear to repay study, but have no place in an analysis of works of fantasy.

d. Later Influence

In demonstrating how Griselda's fantasy adventures are rooted in her psychological condition and are not arbitrary, and in discussing Mrs Molesworth's use of the dream convention, I have tried to show that The Cuckoo Clock, which established the Molesworth 'formula', is good

of its kind. As William Mayne writes in connection with Mrs Molesworth, 'I do not think, judging by my own feelings and the opinion of the dictionary, that novelty is a prerequisite of a "classic", which has come to mean merely an outstanding member of the class.'[1]

The Cuckoo Clock is a classic because it is good of its kind, but its importance is historical as well: it is, as far as I know, the first of its kind. Penelope Farmer makes a distinction between what she calls introvert fantasy (where action 'can go on in people's heads'), and its opposite, extrovert fantasy.[2] The distinction is a useful one, because it serves to characterise the fantasy novel about a child's phantasies, of the kind of The Cuckoo Clock. Many highly acclaimed fantasy novels for children, written in the twentieth century, are of this first type. They have three things in common: the deprived child, the fantasy adventures which stem from its phantasies, and the dream (or daydream). John Masefield's The Midnight Folk (1927), Philippa Pearce's Tom's Midnight Garden (1958), Maurice Sendak's Where the Wild Things Are (1963), William Mayne's A Game of Dark (1971) are good examples. Frank Eyre in his survey gives a list of this sort of fantasy novel, which has tended to proliferate in recent years.[3] It is my contention that The Cuckoo Clock was the first novel of introvert fantasy, the first novel to explore in such detail the way in which a child can compensate for its deprivations by resorting to inner resources. The fantasy adventures of Diamond, in MacDonald's At the Back of the North Wind (1871), coincide with his periods of illness

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1. Mayne, William, in an undated letter to me, June 1978.

2. Farmer, Penelope, '"Jorinda and Jorindel" and Other Stories', Children's Literature in Education, Vol. 7, March 1972, pp. 23-37.

3. Eyre, Frank, British Children's Books in the Twentieth Century, Longman, London, 1971, pp. 118-119.

and sleepwalking, but are not the result of emotional deprivation of the kind that I have described. If there was any novel of introvert fantasy before The Cuckoo Clock, it has not achieved the status of a classic, is certainly not among the nineteenth century children's books in print today, and is not mentioned in any of the general surveys or histories of children's literature available to me. In the later books in the tradition of The Cuckoo Clock, the deprivation has tended to get grimmer, the phantasies darker (A Game of Dark resembles the case history of a psychotic) but the main elements are those which Mrs Molesworth first combined in The Cuckoo Clock.

It is not as if The Cuckoo Clock has only historical importance in being the first of a kind which later writers were to develop independently.[1] The question of direct influence is always dangerous, but two writers of 'introvert fantasy', highly praised by Eyre, admit to the influence of Mrs Molesworth on their work. I wrote to Catherine Storr (author of Marianne Dreams, 1958) and to Joan Robinson (author of When Marnie Was There, 1967), pointing out the resemblances between their work and that of Mrs Molesworth.

Catherine Storr writes,

> I am much impressed by your perception of what might have influenced my own writing. I was, in fact brought up reading the work of Mrs Molesworth, and when I was about nine or ten I began to collect her books and must, at one time, have had over twenty of her children's books.

She goes on to say that the main influences on her writing were not The Cuckoo Clock which nevertheless she knew, but Tell Me A Story (particularly 'The Reel Fairies' and 'Con and the Little People') and Four Winds Farm with 'again, the deprived child, as you point out'.[2]

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1. Unlikely as it seems, perhaps another important landmark is J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan (1904). Neverland, is after all, the map of the Darling children's minds.

2. Storr, Catherine, in a letter to me postmarked 21 June 1978.

Joan Robinson writes,

> I was fascinated by what you wrote. I had no thought of myself as being influenced by Mrs Molesworth, but my favourite of all books as a child was her Children of the Castle! — a far greater favourite than the Cuckoo Clock ....
>
> So yes, you are right, Mrs Molesworth must have been responsible.

She goes on to remark that she agrees that 'fantasy' is more prevalent among psychologically deprived children, and says that she only knew The Cuckoo Clock, The Tapestry Room, and Four Winds Farm.[1]

The seminal position of The Cuckoo Clock in the new tradition of introvert fantasy of literary merit does not mark the end of Mrs Molesworth's influence, which can be seen in general run-of-the-mill fantasy novels as well. In fact, The Cuckoo Clock achieved the dubious distinction of being almost exactly imitated in S. Ashton's extremely pedestrian Cuckoo (1911).[2] The parallels between the two are obvious from the following résumé: May, a little girl, sees the wooden cuckoo in her clock bob and wink at her. It comes alive, and talks in a metallic voice. He asks her if she would like to go on a journey. She shrinks. She goes to his little house, where they talk. She goes into a strange country. She meets various live objects. She goes to a garden where she sees how flowers propagate. She goes to a party. She flies through the air in a beautiful cloak of white feathers. The cuckoo gets her out of various frightening situations, acting as her protector. The adventures are punctuated by cuckooings and whirring sounds. May wonders if she is dreaming and if her surroundings have any objective validity. The book ends with her in bed and the cuckoo bidding her farewell and going into his clock. The last lines are 'Did the cuckoo wink? I wonder.' which attempts to create a sense of ambiguity. Each of these elements is derived from the earlier

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1. Robinson, Joan, in a letter to me dated 3.7.78.

2. Ashton, S. (pseud. E.F. Bosanquet), Cuckoo: A Novel for Children, Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton and Kent, London n.d. (1901).

novel, yet Cuckoo lacks the psychological depth of The Cuckoo Clock, for there is no connection between May's adventures and her psychological state.

In the same way, the general influence of The Cuckoo Clock is to be seen in the fantasy novels of Enid Blyton. I am thinking of her less inferior work, such as that in The Enchanted Wood series. The pattern is the same as that established in The Cuckoo Clock. The children (whose deprivation is material, for their poverty is contrasted with that of their rich friend Connie) meet a series of benevolent magic friends. They go on various journeys to strange lands where they meet strange people, objects, and animals. They are protected by their magic friends. They enjoy the food and parties. In The Wishing Chair series, again, the chair is an object with a personality: though it does not speak, it understands what it is told and takes the children on fantasy journeys. I do not mean to suggest that Mrs Molesworth was the prime influence on Enid Blyton in this tradition, (one of the many which she attempted) but it does seem likely, given the long career and prolific output of Mrs Molesworth, that her work did play a contributory role in the elements that went to make up the particular Blyton fantasy formula. Again, however, it is the superficial aspects of The Cuckoo Clock that appear in Blyton, and there is no psychological connection between the children and their fantasy adventures.

Mary Croxon remarks of Frances Hodgson Burnett's The Secret Garden that it is 'curiously close' to E. Nesbit's The Wonderful Garden, which was published in the same year.[1] Without arguing for any direct influence, I find it more fruitful to consider The Cuckoo Clock as an analogue, so to speak, of The Secret Garden.[2] Both books are studies of the psychological effects of isolation on children.

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1. Croxon, Mary, A Study of Edith Nesbit, University of Birmingham M.A. thesis, 1971, p. 272.

2. Burnett, Frances Hodgson, The Secret Garden, Heinemann, London, 1908.

Griselda and Mary both come to their English relatives from overseas. Like Griselda, both Mary and Colin are motherless, and towards the end of both books surrogate mothers are provided. Like Griselda and Phil, Mary and Colin, isolated from the world, find solace in an enclosed garden. As Griselda finds Phil and sustains and is sustained by him, Mary finds Colin and they support one another, with the girl taking the leading role in both cases. As with The Cuckoo Clock, The Secret Garden depicts a movement from inside to outside, from winter to spring.[1] Of course, The Secret Garden is not a fantasy novel, though Mrs Hodgson Burnett draws upon the folktale in the same way as Mrs Molesworth.[2] However, just as Griselda regards her adventures with the cuckoo with an attitude which need not be shared by the reader, Mary too finds 'magical' such episodes as the robin leading her to the key of the secret garden, which the reader need not. There are also strange coincidences such as Mr Craven's sense of rejuvenation at the same time as his son's, and 'magic' is a word used often in connection with the wonderful rejuvenative power of the earth and nature. What is most interesting, however, is that The Secret Garden resembles The Cuckoo Clock in that the protagonists of both books cope with their loneliness by some mental activity. In The Cuckoo Clock, Griselda may be seen to cope with her situation by using her mind to control it, by having her fantasy adventures which may be only dream-phantasy. In The Secret Garden, Mary and Colin cope with their problems, mental and physical, to some extent by using their minds to control them, though this does not involve any fantasy adventures. As Colin keeps repeating, the magic is in himself. The power of the mind, thought and will was a favourite theme with Mrs Hodgson Burnett and she used it in such

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1. See pp. 204-205 of this thesis.

2. See p. 186 of this thesis.

other books as A Little Princess (1887, revised 1905) and The Lost Prince (1915), where deprived children mould harsh external reality through the power of their imaginations. The striking difference between The Cuckoo Clock and The Secret Garden is two-fold: Mrs Hodgson Burnett was not afraid to depict adults in an unfavourable light; and her protagonists are far less representative of Everychild, far more disagreeable than Griselda; their education has much further to go before they can be regarded as models. Nevertheless, as a study of childhood isolation and the power of the child's mental resources to control harsh reality, The Cuckoo Clock, published thirty years before The Secret Garden, deserves to be considered with it, as in some sense a forerunner of not inconsiderable merit.

Yet despite all this The Cuckoo Clock has never gained due recognition of either its literary merits or its historical importance and influence. Writing in 1888, in the notorious essay in which he implied that Alice (1865) was an imitation of Tom Hood's From Nowhere to the North Pole (1875) Edward Salmon could be forgiven for saying that her 'fairy stories do not give Mrs Molesworth an opportunity for the display of her peculiar genius, and she runs into grooves more or less well worn ....'[1] In 1972, apropos of The Cuckoo Clock and other 'fantasy works of lesser importance' Gillian Ward could still state in a librarianship thesis that

> These and other tales by these authors, were largely concerned with fairies and other creatures found in the fairy tale. They tended to follow and improve upon works of earlier writers and none have produced anything which had sufficient originality to be particularly outstanding in the development of children's fantasy.[2]

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1. Salmon, op.cit., pp. 59-60.

2. Ward, Gillian, British Fantasy Writing For Children in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Tasmanian College of Advanced Education Librarianship thesis, 1972, unpaginated, Chapter III.

Today, when Mrs Molesworth can be seen in her historical perspective, such assertions are less forgivable.

B. MORAL INTENTIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS: AS REVEALED BY THE DEPICTION OF A CHILD CHARACTER

a. Psychological Portraits or Moral Vehicles?

Critics have always said that Mrs Molesworth's fictional children are life-like, 'real', and psychologically accurate portrayals.

> Swinburne (1884): It seems to me not at all easier to draw a life-like child than to draw a life-like man or woman: Shakespeare and Webster were the only two men of their age who could do it with perfect delicacy and success: at least, if there was another who could, I must crave pardon of his happy memory for my forgetfulness or ignorance of his name. Our own age is more fortunate, on this single score at least, having a larger and a far nobler proportion of female writers: among whom, since the death of George Eliot, there is none left whose touch is so exquisite and masterly, whose love is so thoroughly according to knowledge, whose bright and sweet invention is so fruitful, so truthful, or so delightful as Mrs Molesworth's. Any chapter of The Cuckoo Clock or the enchanting Adventures of Herr Baby is worth a shoal of the very best novels dealing with the characters and fortunes of mere adults.[1]

> Edward Salmon (1887): Mrs Molesworth's children are finished studies always. She is never sentimental ... her sympathy with children is unbounded ... she lays bare their little minds, and exposes their foibles, their faults, their virtues, their inward struggles, their first conceptions of duty, and their instinctive knowledge of the right and the wrongs of things. She knows their characters, she understands their wants, and she desires to help them. //... She is an almost infallible guide to the eccentricities of child nature, and analyses the workings of a child's brain ....[2]

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1. Swinburne, Algernon Charles, 'Charles Reade', Nineteenth Century, Vol. 16, No. 92, Oct. 1884, pp. 562-563. Often quoted by Macmillan's advertisements for Mrs Molesworth's books.

2. Salmon, op.cit., p. 60.

"F.H.L." (1893): I suppose that when a child says this or that character is "dear", a grown up person finds it human; and this is probably the reason why Mrs Molesworth's children of fiction are as satisfying to older men and women, as they are attractive to the children of real life.[1]

Isabel Stuart Robson (1900): In tender, often pathetic studies of child life, Mrs Molesworth is unrivalled, her great charm, perhaps, is her realism, in a pure and high sense, and we never for a moment doubt that such children as Molly, Mavis, "Us" or "Herr Baby" are not essentially real. //... she knows the working of the childish mind, its small doubts and fears, its sensitiveness and its trustfulness, and she gives us finished studies, simple, direct, earnest and joyous, of "dream-children", who are, however, thoroughly alive to her.[2]

Roger Lancelyn Green (1951): [Mrs Molesworth's] excellence lies in the delicate insight into child character which is revealed both in the little people of her dramas and in the shaping and development of the dramas themselves. Few writers have understood children as well as Mrs Molesworth does ....[3]

(1960): ... this almost uncanny power of sharing the child's experience. Shorn of the jargon and the dubious interpretations, she is a superb psychologist without any conscious intentions. //... [The Cuckoo Clock] perhaps gets more completely into the child-mind than any of the others ....[4]

Gillian Avery (1965): More than any other Victorian writer she understands the small child's point of view.[5]

(1975): ... her gift for convincing characterisation[6]

When Mrs Molesworth herself talked about characterisation, she stressed that the characters were very important, that she endeavoured

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1. 'F.H.L.', op.cit., p. 1.

2. Robson, op.cit., p. 1.

3. Green, 'Mrs Molesworth and her Books', op.cit., p. 374.

4. Green, B.H.M., op.cit., pp. 67, 61; see also p. 53.

5. Avery, Nineteenth Century Children, op.cit., p. 162.

6. Avery, Gillian, Childhood's Pattern: A study of the heroes and heroines of children's fiction 1770-1950, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1975, p. 148.

to make them 'real'.

> ... in writing stories for either old or young, the great thing is to make the acquaintance of your characters, and get to know them as intimately as you possibly can .... I live with them as much as I can .... And by degrees I feel them becoming very real .... I feel that I am selecting certain incidents out of real lives.[1]

> ... I think I almost always have some groundwork of real fact in every story I write. Even in fairy-tales the characters of the children who go through the adventures are taken from nature. //... But one thing I do study — and that is the characters of my "dream children". I think about them a great deal, till I feel I really know them.[2]

> Not, of course, that "plot", even a certain amount of excitement, is to be objected to by any means, but, as a rule, it should be subservient to the delineation, the almost unconsciously imbibed knowledge of the human beings of the drama.[3]

The encomiums of the critics and Mrs Molesworth's own statements about fictional characters tend to obscure the fact that we have no objective means of knowing what 'real' children are like, that the 'real' child is a notional construct, an adult simulacrum. Today's fictional 'real' child is tomorrow's 'flat' stereotype, and historically, stereotypes of children have either tended to the view that they are imbued with Original Sin — like adults, sinful and corrupt — or Original Innocence — a race apart, and blessed.[4]

So, to begin with, it must be stressed that Mrs Molesworth's primary intention was not the psychologically accurate portrayal of character, but the conveying of a moral vision, and that this affected

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1. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, 'On the Art of Writing Fiction for Children' (1893), in A.P.G., op.cit., pp. 344-345.

2. 'How I Write ...', op.cit., pp. 17-18.

3. 'Story-Reading ...', op.cit., p. 774.

4. See David Grylls, Guardians and Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth Century Literature, Faber & Faber, London etc., 1978; Robert Pattison, The Child Figure in English Literature, University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia, 1978; and Coveney, op.cit., passim.

her character portrayal significantly.

In a number of essays which together comprise perhaps the only detailed and explicit Poetic of children's literature by a Victorian writer for children, Mrs Molesworth made clear her assumptions about the role of the children's writer. These may be schematised as follows:

1. Children are impressionable

   It is but for a very short time that children, as such, can be influenced by books specially written for them; but a very few years during which last the quick receptiveness, the malleability, above all the delightful trustfulness common, one would fain hope, in a greater or less degree to all children.[1]

   ... the marvellous impressionableness of the little hearts and minds...,[2]

2. The author is mature

   Mrs Molesworth tells the children's writer not to become a child, but to remain herself, in full possession of her matured judgement, her wider and deeper views.[3]

   ... one must retain one's older experience, wider grasp, and greater wisdom — greater knowledge of evil, alas! as well as, it is to be hoped, of good.[4]

3. The author has a responsibility towards her audience: she must write not merely to entertain, but to edify, subtly

   ... there should be the real love for children, the intense wish to be of service to them, to do them good, and never harm, which as yet, my dear boys and girls, you cannot fully understand ....[5]

   ... and, to an awe-inspiring extent, we, parents or in any sense guides or teachers of the young, should accept our tremendous responsibilities.[6]

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1. 'Juliana Horatia Ewing' (1886), op.cit., p. 506.

2. 'On the Art ...', op.cit., p. 341.

3. Ibid.

4. 'Story-Reading ...', op.cit., p. 774.

5. 'How I Write ...', op.cit., p. 19.

6. 'Story-Reading ...', op.cit., p. 775.

> ... the unnecessary lowering of the art of writing for children to a mere catering for their amusement or the whiling away of an idle hour ....[1]

> ... in every line, far more than their passing entertainment or amusement was considered ....[2]

> ... suggestion ... seems to me one of the most powerful levers for good ....[3]

> ... never, in commonplace words losing sight of what is in the best sense good for them. Yet all this so skilfully, so unobtrusively, that the presence of the teacher is never suspected.[4]

As one would expect, this stance implied a good deal of selection, even distortion, about the child characters and the relationships with the world which Mrs Molesworth was willing to portray in her books for children. Such portrayal involved points of both omission and commission, and Mrs Molesworth was explicit about at least four of these.

First, she refused to portray precociousness in her children's books. She made this clear when she made the strident distinction between books about children, which portrayed fictional children in a light which was not suitable for real children to perceive, and books for children, which portrayed fictional children in a way from which real children could derive benefit. It is evident that she felt that real children should not be shown childhood as a state of precociousness, which obviously did not fit in with her vision of childhood, as a children's writer.

> [Mrs Ewing's books] are, say some, more about children than for children .... But with this it is possible to disagree.[5]

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1. 'Juliana Horatia Ewing', op.cit., p. 505.

2. 'On the Art ...', op.cit., p. 341.

3. 'Juliana Horatia Ewing', op.cit., pp. 505-506.

4. 'On the Art ...', op.cit., p. 341. She praised Mrs Ewing for her lack of didacticism ('Juliana Horatia Ewing', op.cit., p. 508).

5. 'Juliana Horatia Ewing', op.cit., p. 505.

> ... writing about children is by no means the same thing as writing for them. So much the contrary, indeed, that I could instance several story-books almost entirely about children which are far less advisable reading for them than others of which the characters are not children at all. This distinction is constantly overlooked and forgotten, and yet it is surely based on common sense? The very last thing a wise mother would allow would be the children's presence at any necessary consultation with doctor or teacher about their health, physical or mental. And the interest of many of the charming and delightful stories about children, which in our days have almost come to constitute a new department in literature, depends very greatly on the depicting and description of childish peculiarities and idiosyncracies which it would not be wholesome for their compeers to discuss or realise.[1]
>
> The "best" and most amusing anecdotes about children are seldom such as it would be wise to relate to their compeers.[2]
>
> ... the confusion in readers' and writers' minds that all books about children are suitable for children, whereas the real case is that a large mass of the literature dealing with the analysis of childish character ... is entirely unfitted for undeveloped minds and hearts ....[3]
>
> Mrs Molesworth said "I think it much healthier for children to read fairy stories than books which lead them to compare themselves with heroes and heroines. Stories about children are not always the healthiest reading for children, because they tend to make them introspective .... It is a pity," she said, "that children should lose the dreamy fanciful childishness which used to be their characteristic in years gone by. I fancy that the children of today are the victims, not so much of over-indulgence as of over-notice. It is, of course, necessary that the children should be carefully noticed and watched; but they should not be allowed to be conscious that their elders are always considering them. It has a tendency to make them feel as if they were the centre of the universe."[4]
>
> And this leads me to mention what I am almost afraid may seem a "fad", so often have I had occasion to allude to it — namely, the distinction, the most important distinction, which should be drawn between writing about and writing for children. It is strange that parents or those who have the direction of children's reading should

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1. 'On the Art ...', op.cit., p. 342.

2. Ibid., p. 346.

3. 'F.H.L.', op.cit., quoting Mrs Molesworth, p. 1.

4. Tooley, op.cit., quoting Mrs Molesworth, pp. 3-4.

> be so blind to this .... And I have actually heard people say that [Florence Montgomery's Misunderstood] was too "morbid" and "too melancholy" for children! It was never meant for them. //Other books, among them some of Mrs Ewing's exquisite and inimitable tales, seem to me open to the same warning.[1]

> We want to brace, not to discourage; to make our readers thoughtful, to eliminate self-conceit and self-satisfaction, without fostering any approach to morbid introspection. There are books ... which are better, more wholesome reading than others ... peopled almost entirely by small personages, and dwelling principally on their sayings and doings.[2]

It is clear from the above that the child characters portrayed by Molesworth in her books for children would tend toward the stereotype of Romantic Original Innocence rather than Original Sin, since she insisted that real children should not be exposed to morbid or 'cute' or over-analysed fictional children which might in some way 'corrupt' them. This, though she elsewhere remarked clearheadedly:

> No true child-lover would maintain that all children are equally lovable, or indeed, in some — though I think, rare instances — lovable at all.[3]

Two corollaries of this point are more important than the point itself. One, it is clear that Mrs Molesworth's novels for children were intended to convey to real children a vision of childhood that she thought it suitable for them to have, and that she knew that this vision need not necessarily include the whole truth about children as they 'really' were, or as they were portrayed in more 'realistic' books for adults.

Two, in holding this view, Mrs Molesworth was representative of a generally held Victorian attitude. Charlotte Yonge said in 1888 that

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1. 'Story-Reading ...', op.cit., p. 774.

2. Ibid.

3. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, 'A Ramble About Childhood', The Girls' Own Annual, Vol. 20, Oct. 1898 - Sept. 1899, Feb. 4,1899, p. 292.

> Stories that are in fact a study of children with peculiar ways and odd sayings are of no use. The tale must take the child's point of view yet without obviously writing down to its level ....[1]

and that

> By far the best books of Stella Austin's stories, which are popular ... have for the most part the fault of admiring the children's simplicity too palpably, and might foster affectation or self-consciousness.[2]

In 1895 Canon Ainger, making the same distinction as Mrs Molesworth, cited the very books she had mentioned: Misunderstood and some of Mrs Ewing's work.[3] The distinction and attitude outlasted the Victorians. In 1906 Eveline Godley said that

> No one supposes Dombey and Son, or Uncle Tom's Cabin, to have been written for the schoolroom; that they should ever have been read by children is certainly not the author's fault.[4]

And even today, talking about the work of an author whose fictional children are certainly much closer to the stereotype of Original Sin than those condemned by Mrs Molesworth and her peers, a critic remarks:

> A High Wind in Jamaica is about children rather than for them.[5]

Apparently, characterisation of children in children's books tends to be invariably a matter of omission of certain aspects of childhood as the era conceives it.

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1. Yonge, op.cit., p. 16.

2. Ibid., p. 39.

3. Ainger, Alfred, 'The Children's Books of a Hundred Years Ago' (1895), in A.P.G., op.cit., p. 74.

4. Godley, Eveline C., 'A Century of Children's Books' (1906), in A.P.G., op.cit., p. 97.

5. Parker, Geoffrey, 'Richard Hughes' The Spider's Palace and Other Stories', Children's Literature in Education, Vol. 20, Spring 1976, p. 32.

Mrs Molesworth's second set of omissions is not as clear as the first. She explicitly excludes any frightening element,[1] and takes refuge in vague phrases scattered through her essays, phrases such as 'all suggestion of many of the sadder facts of our complex human nature ... many points a child's story-teller must be content to evade ....'[2] These unnamed elements to be avoided are probably sex and lingering accounts of death, both of which are conspicuous by their absence in Mrs Molesworth's novels.

Third, Mrs Molesworth made it clear that in novels for children, parents or guardians should be presented as worthy of respect and trust. She disapproved of the presentation of

> ... judicious or injudicious management of little people on the part of their elders, of over-care or more culpable neglect, of misunderstanding of their complex and often strangely reserved and perplexing characters.... And though it would not be right, because it would not be sincere, to make of our stories for children a fool's paradise, where all the big people are perfect, and only the boys and girls in fault, still the obtruding or emphasising parental mistakes and failings should surely be avoided when writing for the tender little ones whose lovely belief in "mother" is the very breath and sunshine of their lives ....[3]

Adults may be shown as fallible, but not as oppressive or uncomprehending, and children should not be presented as distrusting them, or having cause so to do. It should be noted that both in Misunderstood and in Mrs Ewing's books adults are shown as having feet of clay, very fallible indeed, and that Mrs Molesworth and Canon Ainger had disapproved of them as fit reading for children.

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1. 'Story-Reading ...', op.cit., p. 774.

2. Ibid.; see also 'Juliana Horatia Ewing', op.cit., p. 505; 'On the Art ...', op.cit., p. 341; Woolf, op.cit., p. 676.

3. 'On the Art ...', op.cit., pp. 342-343; see also 'Story-Reading ...', op.cit., p. 774; Salmon, op.cit., pp. 60-61; Robson, op.cit., p. 1.

Fourth, Mrs Molesworth consciously wished to convey through her books for children an optimistic attitude to the moral and other vicissitudes of life, the existence of which she did not wish to conceal. She said that children's books could indeed deal with

> the moral and spiritual problems which sooner or later in its career each soul must disentangle for itself[1]

and that they should be

> true ... to what may be or are actual experiences in this always chequered, often sorrowful, world of ours .... But underlying the sad things, and the wrong things, and the perplexing things which must be touched upon in the little dramas, however simple, there must be belief in the brighter side — in goodness, happiness and beauty — as the real background after all. And any one who does not feel ... that this "optimism" is well-founded, had better leave writing for children alone.[2]

Hence she praised Andersen for the basic faith she descried beneath the surface sadness of his work. She made it quite clear that

> Children should not be saddened before their time, while yet, on the other hand, they should not be deceived.[3]

Her conscious moral limitations on the 'realistic' portrayal of character and relationships are now obvious: fictional child characters must not be precocious or encourage morbidity in the reader, but be in some sense vehicles of a suitable view of childhood for children; adults may be presented as fallible, but nevertheless as the repository of some body of received wisdom; the fictional child must therefore be portrayed as having a good relationship with fictional adults; sex and death must be omitted; the fictional child must face some moral problem which it must solve in such a way that the book conveys an optimistic vision. It appears that a good many restrictions and

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1. 'Juliana Horatia Ewing', op.cit., p. 506.

2. 'On the Art ...', op.cit., pp. 341-342.

3. 'Story-Reading ...', op.cit., p. 774.

limitations modify Mrs Molesworth's willingness to depict character in all its psychological realism, something that the critics have not made clear.

It also appears, then, that the real question is a rhetorical one: despite all that she must or must not do in portraying children in a children's novel, how does Mrs Molesworth make her readers feel that her child character is in some sense authentic, credible, sympathetic and interesting? She seems to have had three basic strategies.

Mrs Molesworth's first strategy to give the impression that her child characters are psychologically realistic while they remain vehicles of a moral intention is to make them not _ideal_ children, but _model_ children. The fictional model child is the good but fallible child working towards perfection. Griselda is a model child, and so she embodies a vision of childhood which Mrs Molesworth thought it suitable for children to have, presenting an inherent virtue and an inherently correct set of attitudes. But Griselda occasionally lapses from virtue and this makes her credible and sympathetic, especially as her lapses are explained if not extenuated. Since she triumphs over her shortcomings, it is indicated that the child reader, for whom she is a model, can do the same.

Mrs Molesworth's second strategy stems from her assumption that the child is different in kind from the adult. Hence, she talked of the necessity of

> clothing your own personality with theirs, of seeing as they see, feeling as they feel, realising the intensity of their hopes and fears, their unutterably pathetic sorrows, their sometimes even _more_ pathetic joys[1]

and the necessity to

> become, in some sense, a child again, in the first place; to see through child-eyes; to hear with child-ears —

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1. 'On the Art ...', _op.cit._, p. 341.

> above all, to feel with child-heart.[1]

This means that Mrs Molesworth sees real children as almost a different species from adults, and attempts to translate the terms of one group into the terms of the other when portraying fictional children. Hence, as Salmon said, she

> analyses the workings of a child's brain in a manner that explains doubts which the child is either incapable or afraid of attempting.[2]

In the same year as The Cuckoo Clock, Anna Sewell wrote Black Beauty, in which she painted what strikes one as a convincing picture of a horse. She did this by presenting it as similar to, but more limited than, the average human. Mrs Molesworth did something of the same sort in her novels for children, for her assumption was that children are essentially innocent and that therefore, when a child did something that was conventionally 'wrong' by adult standards, the act must have been caused by a misunderstanding or misconception on the child's part, not deliberately or knowingly. Hence, she presents the act from a point of view which is sufficiently divergent from that of the 'normal' adult, showing that the wrong action, seen from this point of view, was not intentionally committed as such, or had extenuating circumstances. Her fictional children, then, are 'good', but their point of view is presented as limited by two main things: one, the limitations of their intelligence and information, and two, their low emotional resistance to the vicissitudes that they face.

In Carrots, thus, Carrots puts away a sovereign he has found, not realising that it is more than the 'golden penny' he thinks it is. He does not realise that he is in fact stealing, and denies any knowledge of the lost coin, because 'sovereigns' to him means painted pictures

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1. 'Story-Reading ...', op.cit., p. 774.

2. Salmon, op.cit., p. 60.

of kings and queens. Because of his limited intelligence and information, he is frightened out of his wits by his unsympathetic father and brother, who can only see that he has committed a crime and 'lied' about it.

In The Carved Lions, Geraldine does not realise that in knowing French better than her teacher she has alienated her. She misses her parents and brother at boarding school and one day in her highly unsteady emotional state, she is able to repeat a French poem perfectly to her headmistress, but forgets it when her teacher enters the room (an episode which was rehashed in Hermy). What looks like disobedience is in fact the result of an emotional block peculiar to the child, which adults cannot easily understand.

Mrs Molesworth's essentially Romantic view of childhood as a state apart and children as a different breed of being explains the occasional note of sentimentality that accompanies the descriptions of the apparently wrong act and the child's feelings when he is blamed. She disliked Misunderstood because it depicted a father's misunderstanding of a child's naughtiness (which stems from a peculiar 'childish' viewpoint), but Carrots and The Carved Lions do at times read as if they were written with the same assumptions.

I will discuss Griselda's particular 'childishness', her low emotional resistance to the shock of various vicissitudes, and the limitations of her intelligence and information — the first when I discuss the primary virtue which the book tries to inculcate, the second when I deal with the authentication of the fantasy adventures.

The model Griselda's lapses from virtue are in part explained by the fact that as a child, her emotional resistances are lower than that of adults. Mrs Molesworth's third strategy of authentication is to explain her lapses in another manner: by making them psychologically credible in terms of human nature generally. At certain points the reader reacts by feeling that human beings do

indeed behave like that, though pure reason would dictate otherwise.

Mrs Molesworth's fourth major strategy of authentication is to have her moral vehicle display signs of spirit. There is an ever present danger, in life as in literature, that 'good' people lose some of their efficacy as models for the rest of us because their virtue and humility expresses itself in what one construes as mealy-mouthedness and priggishness. Griselda, the model child, is never priggish, because she sometimes shows signs of a healthy spiritedness, which is not insubordination.

I shall now consider the primary virtue which the book seeks to inculcate, submissiveness to authority. This will involve a consideration of the form authority takes, Griselda's relationship and reactions to it, her model nature, her inherent virtue and fallibility, the extenuating circumstances of her childish low emotional resistances, her human failings, and her spirit. I shall then consider the second aim of the book, to convey and justify an optimistic attitude.

b. Submission to Authority

In The Cuckoo Clock the main figures of authority are the Misses Grizzel and Tabitha, Griselda's great-aunts, and the cuckoo.

Though the great-aunts do not provide Griselda with a companion and play, they are not responsible for her main deprivation, and are in a way excused for their part in Griselda's misfortunes. Hence, they are not to be equated with the cruel stepmothers of fairy tale. Though Miss Grizzel does not realise that Griselda needs companionship, and though she reacts with horror when Griselda finds a companion for herself, this is because she is old, and thinks all boys rude and naughty (p. 148). She later sets her seal of approval on Griselda's new friendship (pp. 153- 154).

Miss Grizzel's basic ideas about the management of children are sound: she has 'a bump of "common sense"' (p. 93), is aware of the dangers of spoiling (pp. 93, 96), and the value of discipline (p. 95). She punishes insubordination, but forgives readily (pp. 154, 186).

The aunts are kind to Griselda, worry about her, and love her very much (pp. 15, 24, 26, 45, 76, 93, 94, 99, 152, 186).

It is made clear that they are old and easily upset by little matters (pp. 26, 77, 150-151). They are presented sympathetically, with a touch of mockery: Miss Tabitha echoes all that Miss Grizzel says, and the only point at which she disagrees with Miss Grizzel is when the latter worries about whether she has treated Griselda badly (p. 152).

It is apparent that Mrs Molesworth directs all her efforts to convincing the reader that though the figures of authority may be fallible, they are both kind and responsible, and worthy of submission to by the child. In some of her other novels (Peterkin, The Story of a Year), when nasty adults are presented, there are always explanations given, and they are contrasted with the nice ones. Later fantasy novelists such as Clifford Mills (Where the Rainbow Ends, 1912), or Phyllis Austen (The Goldfish Bowl, c. 1920) were not averse to showing surrogate parents, not parents, as both incompetent and cruel. But for Mrs Molesworth, the guardian was good, and so the succession of kindly old maiden ladies that appear in her fantasy novels (The Ruby Ring, The Woodpigeons and Mary, The Magic Nuts, The Children of the Castle, Christmas Tree Land) are all kind and responsible, meriting the respect of their charges, though they may be occasionally misguided. Harry Levin stresses the importance of the surrogate father in Dickens's work, the kindly man who fills in for the real father.[1] Much the same

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1. Levin, Harry, 'The Uncles of Dickens', in The Worlds of Victorian Fiction, ed. Jerome Buckley, Harvard U.P., Cambridge Mass. etc., 1975, pp. 1-36 passim.

may be said about the aunts of Mrs Molesworth: often unmarried, sometimes childless, they look after their charges well.

Critics have noticed that the cuckoo is a 'very moral' bird.[1] The early American reviewer praised the book's 'gracious and effective moralising',[2] for most of which the cuckoo is responsible; Margery Fisher says that Mrs Molesworth 'charmed children gently into the nursery virtues with [her] domestic sprites',[3] and Gillian Avery thinks that the cuckoo, 'kind,but rather governessy', is an extension of Mrs Molesworth herself.[4] The interesting thing is, however, that the cuckoo's didacticism takes up where Miss Grizzel's leaves off. That is, all the authority figures, human and non-human,'real' and 'fantasy', work together to teach the fictional child the correct attitudes, which the novel in turn teaches the real child reader.

Submission to authority,the primary 'nursery virtue' which the novel preaches, is conveyed to Griselda in three ways by Miss Grizzel and the cuckoo.

First, Griselda is taught to respect age. Miss Grizzel tells Griselda that she must respect even the mandarin figurines, because they are older than she is. The unconscious irony implied by Griselda wondering how Miss Grizzel herself can then afford to take liberties with the figurines (p. 12), does not undercut the fundamental attitude. Though Griselda resents being constantly told that she is like her grandmother Sybilla, who was 'so good', saying that this makes her feel old (p. 42), she learns her lesson when the cuckoo, having shown

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1. Blount, op.cit., p. 97.

2. Darling, op.cit., p. 353.

3. Fisher, Margery, Intent Upon Reading: A Critical Appraisal of Modern Fiction for Children, Brockhampton, Leicester, 1961, p. 98.

4. Avery,'Introduction' to My New Home, op.cit., p. 9.

her a vision of Sybilla, ironically reminds her of her exasperation (p. 85). He is giving her a sense of family history, teaching her respect for age, and showing her that adults are always right in what they say.

Second, Miss Grizzel tells Griselda that the cuckoo can teach her punctuality and 'the faithful discharge of duty' (pp. 15, 20). For Griselda, the faithful discharge of duty consists in 'obeying orders', more particularly, in application to her lessons. Duty, obedience, and hard work go together. One is reminded of Carlyle's 'Gospel of work',[1] and the earnestness and desire for self-improvement that were characteristic of the Victorian age.[2] The epigraph to Chapter 11 reads:

> Children, try to be good!
> That is the end of all teaching ...
> And if you find it hard,
> Your efforts you need but double;
> Nothing deserves reward
> Unless it has given us trouble.

It is clear that for Mrs Molesworth, being 'good', obeying, and making an effort in working hard were virtually indistinguishable.

'Obeying orders' is one of the cuckoo's shibboleths. He himself has to obey orders (p. 35); he tells Griselda when she doesn't, things go wrong (p. 35). He tells her to 'obey orders' and leave the mandarins' party before it has finished (p. 73). She is still enjoying herself, and whose orders these are, or the reason why they are given is left out. It is clear that unquestioning obedience is required. He mentions that the sun and the moon too 'obey orders' (p. 168), with the final result that Griselda can tell her maid Dorcas, near the end of the book —

> "... it seems to me, Dorcas, that it's all 'obeying orders' together. There's the sun now, just getting

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1. See Houghton, op.cit., pp. 242-243.

2. Ibid., pp. 249, 251.

> up, and the moon just going to bed — they are always obeying, aren't they? I wonder why it should be so hard for people — for children, at least."
>
> (p. 184)

It should be noticed that Mrs Molesworth underlines the connection between the cuckoo and Griselda's aunt who at one point holds 'up her hand in a way that reminded Griselda of the cuckoo's favourite "obeying orders"' (p. 95). Miss Grizzel and the cuckoo think and act along the same lines. All authority demands unquestioning obedience.

For Griselda, obeying orders implies working hard at her lessons. Miss Grizzel knows that Griselda must work hard, whether she likes it or not (p. 94). The cuckoo shows her Sybilla's grandfather having to word hard (p. 82), and also the butterflies, whom she thought were idle (pp. 112-116, 121-122). Griselda gradually works harder and harder, and finds that if she puts her mind to her lessons they become easier (pp. 21, 128-129, 186). She ultimately learns that 'the only way as yet discovered of getting through hard tasks is to set to work and do them' (p. 129). The child reader is being told something about hard work, particularly his studies. And at one point Mrs Molesworth indicates to the adult reader that children may be induced to work if they love the people in authority over them: Phil resolves to learn how to read, not from any love of reading, but because he knows his beloved mother would like it (p. 141).

The third thing that Griselda is taught is to control her temper. She loses it once when, impatient with her lessons, she throws a book at the clock (p. 19), then again when Miss Grizzel is determined to make her work though this time it takes the form of sulks (pp. 96, 97-100), and again when she thinks Miss Grizzel will not let her play with Phil (p. 150). On the third occasion, Miss Grizzel is firm with her, and the cuckoo makes her ashamed by telling her about the little black dogs of temper that torment children (p. 170). Through the novel, Griselda is learning to keep her temper, and just before her last

outburst we are told that she has learnt that 'an ill-tempered child is not, on the whole, likely to be as much loved as a good-tempered one' (p. 129) — something that Mrs Molesworth is trying to convey to her child reader as well.

It is a mark of literary tact that Mrs Molesworth did not have her protagonist established in all the virtues at once, and as the page references above show, Griselda's conviction of the uses of keeping her temper do not make it any easier for her to abide by them.

It would be as well to digress for a moment here and point out that the cuckoo also teaches Griselda certain theoretical concepts, which are not precisely 'moral', but which are part of what the book tries to convey since Mrs Molesworth thought that 'suggestion ... of scientific achievements' was also not unsuitable in a children's book.[1]

The cuckoo teaches Griselda that 'big and little' and 'slow and quick' are all relative, all 'matters of fancy'. Every time such questions arise Griselda feels extremely puzzled (pp. 49, 59, 158-159, 161, 178). She learns to take this as adequate explanation of the cuckoo's and her own changes in size and the duration of her nocturnal adventures (pp. 59, 173). The concept has been introduced in the book, and the point has been made that Griselda, the model child, is no more perfect than the average human when faced with such bewildering matters.

Sometimes Griselda asks for information. Her questioning spirit is part of her virtue. She thus learns that objects on earth are imperfect copies of their prototypes elsewhere. She is told that the palanquin she has seen at her godmother's is a 'clumsy human imitation' of the one in the Country of Nodding Mandarins, as Dorcas's paper flowers are in relation to Miss Grizzel's roses (p. 63), and that the colour of earthly flowers are taken from the unfading fairy flowers

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1. 'Juliana Horatia Ewing' (1886), op.cit., pp. 505-506.

(p. 116). Mrs Molesworth, who was not an ill-educated woman, was not afraid of introducing Platonic ideas into a children's book.

In The Cuckoo Clock these ideas seem to be introduced as 'information' given to Griselda. In at least two other books she used these ideas in a similar way, but perhaps more as rhetorical devices to persuade her reader of the validity of her created fairylands than as information. In The Tapestry Room (1879), when Hugh meets his companion Jeanne in his dream-adventure, and she does not seem to remember it the next day, Marcelline the mysterious maid remarks that there are '"two of everything and the great thing is to keep each of the two in its right place"'. There is also talk of the 'daylight' and 'moonlight' Jeanne. And Roger Lancelyn Green has remarked of The Children of the Castle (1890) that 'Mrs Molesworth seems to be subscribing to the Platonic theory of archetypes: "For what we see, children dear, is but a type, faint and shadowy, of the real things that are."'[2]

Just as Griselda learns about 'Platonic archetypes', she learns through the whimsical account of how the butterflies paint flowers and distribute seeds (the one dated and cloying portion of the book) about the role of insects in plant propagation, and how humans should not meddle with plants but leave them alone like wild flowers (pp. 113-117). She is taught that there is life on the moon (p. 177). The information has been conveyed, both to Griselda and to the reader.

However, when Griselda asks too many awkward questions, the cuckoo makes it clear that as a child, there are many things she is'"not intended to know'"(p. 172). Even as far as questions and information

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1. Green, Roger Lancelyn, 'Introduction' to Mrs Molesworth, Four Winds Farm and The Children of the Castle, Garland, New York, 1977, p. v. To the best of my knowledge, the only other notable writers who use Platonic ideas as part of a rhetoric in fantasy novels for children are C.S. Lewis, particularly in the first and last books of the Narnia series, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe and The Last Battle, and E. Nesbit, in The Magic City, from which C.S. Lewis may have derived them.

go, the child must be submissive to older and wiser beings.

Griselda is taught respect to age, 'faithful discharge of duty', and to keep her temper. But as the model child, her being taught these attitudes is presented as establishing more firmly the virtuous attitudes that are already inherent in her. She demonstrates her natural affection for her relatives and the cuckoo (pp. 161, 167). Despite her lapses of conduct, Griselda makes it clear at one point that '"... of course I know I should obey ..."' (p. 184), and at another, it is stated that she 'did not dislike lessons; in fact, she had always thought she was rather fond of them' (p. 18). She rarely got into tempers when she was at home (p. 36). Likewise, after she has been indolent or ill-tempered, she resolves to please the cuckoo and her great-aunts — authority — by working hard (pp. 127, 133, 185).

Griselda is the repository of other virtues as well. From some, she never lapses, and when she lapses from others, she repents and is taught better by the cuckoo. She is, in fact, always ready to repent (pp. 20-21, 29, 34, 115, 184). These virtues are all corollaries of the primary virtue of submission to adults. Gillian Avery has pointed out that the one unforgivable sin for children in Victorian times was lying.[1] Griselda may appear to regret that she told her aunt the truth about meeting Phil (pp. 150-151), but this is only in a moment of temper, and she does not lose by it ultimately. The idea of concealment never crosses her mind, as she 'fearlessly' tells Dorcas that she will tell her aunt everything and ask for permission. The model child has no secrets from its guardians, and every action it commits must have their approval and permission. Griselda is truthful herself, and she teaches Phil not to conceal anything from his nurse and always ask her permission (p. 142). Mrs Molesworth was

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1. Avery, Childhood's Pattern, op.cit., pp. 138-141.

later to carry this basic idea to almost ludicrous lengths, as she demonstrated in novels such as This and That and The February Boys that even an innocent secret, which guardians have permitted children to have, can have unfortunate consequences.

Griselda trusts her superiors, even against her common sense: she follows the cuckoo into the garden even though she thinks it will be too cold (pp. 107-109). Her trust, of course, is not misplaced. She is grateful for the pleasures she is given, and does not take them for granted (p. 76). She never forgets to greet or to thank her superiors (pp. 10, 36, 38, 47, 87, 110, 127, 132, 161, 167, 183, 196). She is not greedy (pp. 69, 124). She is polite and considerate to her superiors: when it is time to leave the mandarins she asks whether she ought to say goodbye (p. 73), at the ball she is concerned that the cuckoo does not eat anything (p. 69), when her aunts move slowly she moves slowly too, despite her inclinations (p. 24), she bears 'meekly' the hated drive to her godmother's (p. 23), she explains to the cuckoo that she concealed her throwing the book at the clock from her aunts because it would have made them more unhappy than before (p. 35).

She is aware of her responsibilities towards her guardians: she worries that if the cuckoo takes her to visit the mandarins her aunts will be worried if he does not return in time to strike the next hour (p. 58); when she and Phil forget the time she realises that because she is the elder it is her fault (p. 190); she realises her responsibility in promising to take care of Phil and is prepared to be held accountable to his nurse (p. 192); when she arrives late at Phil's farmhouse she tells his mother 'how uneasy she was about the anxiety her aunts would be feeling' (p. 194).

Griselda's qualities are all those which stem from her basic submission to the adults in whose care she has been placed. She is

even neat in her dress because it pleases her aunts (p. 8), and teaches Phil to be neat as well (pp. 136, 143, 187). Of a piece with these qualities are three others. Griselda is brave, for 'she had never learnt that there was anything to be afraid of' (p. 31). She is kind to animals (p. 102). Though she is a trifle indignant when she finds that the bird is the cuckoo and he could have got in without her help, she realises the truth of his homily:

> "Child!" said the cuckoo ... "you are very foolish. Is a kind thought or action ever wasted? Can your eyes see what such good seeds grow into? They have wings, Griselda — kindnesses have wings and roots, remember that — wings that never droop, and roots that never die." (p. 104)

She repents immediately, and later that night in Butterfly Land, she worries that she will crush the butterflies that adorn her dress (p. 120). Lastly, she takes to heart his insistence that she organise her thoughts, be exact in her statements, learn to define what she means, and not chatter hastily or jump to conclusions (pp. 47, 48, 53, 111, 113, 167).

Griselda is thus the model child. Her cardinal virtue of submission to the adult expresses itself primarily in respecting her elders, obedience, working hard at her lessons, and keeping her temper; and secondarily in candour, trust, gratefulness, politeness, moderation, consideration, responsibility, neatness, bravery, kindness to animals, and mental self-discipline in accordance with adult precepts. Her character is rendered realistic primarily by having her fall from virtue occasionally, with her lapses explained but never justified.

When one analyses the three occasions upon which Griselda, the model child who knows what is right, lapses, one finds that there are always extenuating circumstances. The reader is invited to understand and empathise with Griselda's feelings, though not condone her actual conduct.

On the first occasion, when Griselda throws the book at the clock 'in a passion', with it and her lessons, her having to work 'alone was not lively, and her teachers were very strict' (p. 18); her arithmetic is hard and she is tired (p. 19); Miss Grizzel's sententiousness and the feeling that the cuckoo is mocking her are the last straw (p. 20); she didn't feel naughty, the mood passed quickly, and she seemed to be partly jesting as well (p. 35). These touches are psychologically convincing as an account of how minor pressures can momentarily overcome emotional resistance and make one commit rash acts. All the more so as Griselda is a child, and her emotional reserves are low.

On the second occasion, Griselda sulks on being told that she will have to go back to work after she has been ill. Then, her aunt's announcement seemed 'like a sudden downpour of cold water, or a rush of east wind' (p. 95). She knows that her lessons will be hard, her head will ache, and her tutor will be cross (p. 95). 'The dull cold day' outside does nothing to help (p. 96). On this occasion the psychological realism lies in the account of ennui and discontent, when Griselda finds even pleasant things boring because she is anticipating work the next day (p. 96); irritation as a result of a minor annoyance (the clock appearing to mock her again, p. 97); emotional blackmail as when she 'held up her face to be kissed in a meekly reproachful way' (p. 99); and the long account, taking three pages (pp. 98-100) of how knowing one's duty is not the same as doing it, and how one may work oneself up into a state of self-pity and anger as a means of evading the dictates of one's conscience. The occasional touches of irony in this account, when Mrs Molesworth makes Griselda's evasions to herself quite clear, are indications that though Griselda is in the wrong, a sense of proportion about her wrong-doings is being maintained.

On the third occasion, Griselda asks permission to play with Phil, a perfectly reasonable request, which her aunt appears to refuse. She loses her temper, and is rude, and rushes up to bed. Here the extenuating circumstances are that she is excited at meeting the first child she has seen for months (p. 136), she knows she has done nothing wrong (p. 147), and that she could have deceived if she had so desired (p. 148). It is psychologically convincing that Griselda's anticipation of her aunt's refusal makes her predisposed to give way to temper (p. 148); that her anxiety to get her request granted led her to make it in such a way that it was certain to be refused with a 'sort of spiteful pleasure in injuring her own cause' (p. 149). Finally, the insight that if her request had been granted 'she would really, in a strange distorted sort of way, have been disappointed' (p. 149) is excellent as an account of how the reactions of human beings are not always rational. In fact, the only comparable insight of this kind which I know in a novel occurs in Trollope's Can You Forgive Her? when Alice Vavasour writes to tell her lover that she is going on a trip of which she knows he will disapprove, and then is disappointed when he doesn't.

The reader is shown why Griselda acts as she does, what the extenuating circumstances are. He is invited to see in the protagonist of the novel his own experiences of such psychological phenomena as moments of unbearable irritation which momentarily unbalance one; of working oneself up to escape one's own culpability; of attempting emotional blackmail; of cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. But all this is part of a moral intention, of a scheme of brainwashing: just as Griselda the fictitious model, lapses, but lapses only to go forward, the reader too should know that going forward and improving are indeed possible and desirable.

Apart from the extenuating circumstances which make the reader understand Griselda's actions, and the psychological touches which make him empathise with her, Mrs Molesworth has three other ways of making the reader feel that the model child is neither an impossible, 'flat' cardboard figure, nor too priggish to be quite likable. The model is made attractive because it is made human.

First, Mrs Molesworth has Griselda feeling awkward and embarrassed about her faults when the cuckoo reminds her of her misconduct, and trying not to deny the misconduct but to evade the embarrassment (pp. 111, 169). This strikes one as a quite natural, human response, though it is not presented as a failing.

Second, Griselda is presented as having a healthy appetite: always a rather endearing mark of being human. She is shown at breakfast (pp. 9, 26), supper (p. 24) to which Phil also invites her (p. 193), tea (p. 146). Bread-and-milk (p. 9), gingerbread (p. 24), elderberry wine (pp. 45, 149), tansy tea (p. 88), 'lots of beef tea, and jelly, and grapes, and sponge-cakes, and everything nice' (p. 93), 'an orange and three biscuits' (p. 149) are also mentioned. When she sits at tea with the maid Dorcas, she says

> "I'm fearfully hungry, I can tell you. You'll have to cut a whole lot more bread and butter, and not 'ladies' slices' either."
>
> (p. 146)

Third, and most striking, though the primary virtue which the book seeks to convey is submission to authority, Mrs Molesworth sets it up so that Griselda can, upon occasion, show signs of spirit and answer back. Contained, very carefully circumscribed and harmless 'rebelliousness' is also always attractive. When the cuckoo pontificates, she stops him, and brings him back to the matter in hand (pp. 54, 168-169, 175-176). His shibboleth 'Obeying orders' goes hand in hand with another, even more irritating one 'You have a great deal to learn', which reflects

his notion of adult superiority. Griselda's reactions to this are cumulative, till at the end she dances about with her hands clasped, entreating him to stop (pp. 48, 53, 62, 108). She does not like being laughed at (pp. 38, 177), and upon occasion can even point out what looks like the cuckoo's stupidity (p. 176).

It should be noticed that Griselda never forgets herself so far as to habitually voice her irritation with her great-aunts, though occasionally she mutters under her breath when Miss Grizzel talks about the golden hours of youth, perhaps alluding to Isaac Watts's notorious 'The Bee', which Lewis Carroll had earlier parodied (p. 19), or when she is told that her lessons will recommence (p. 96). When she loses her temper with Miss Grizzel in connection with playing with Phil, the matter is treated as one of grave import.

But the cuckoo, toy, mother-surrogate, playmate, and wise authority, is both the wise preceptor and a parody of the wise preceptor. Since he is not human, he can be all these things at once, without inconsistency. The wise preceptor was a fictional commonplace in Georgian books for children. Rousseau's Emile gave Thomas Day the inspiration for his Mr Barlow, the tutor of Sanford and Merton, who was so notorious for having all information at his fingertips, that even though Sandford and Merton was reprinted till the end of the century, Dickens voiced his irritation with him in Our Mutual Friend, and Francis Burnand parodied him in The New Sandford and Merton (1872) where he was depicted as something of a reprobate. Mrs Molesworth, the upholder of adult authority and dignity, did not do this, but the cuckoo is adult enough to be dealt with ironically, as when he practises a typically 'adult' stratagem for concealing his ignorance — 'hastily' telling Griselda not to argue (p. 49). The superficial irony reinforces the unquestioned notion of adult authority.

Georgian lesson books — Richmall Mangnall's notorious Questions (1800, still in print in 1877) or Mrs Markham's History of England (1823) — were cast in the form of stilted dialogues, in which child automatons droned out feed questions to be answered with strings of hard facts, as Gillian Avery puts it. The dialogue form, in which eager children sought for information, carried over into fiction: Mrs Sherwood's The Fairchild Family is filled with it. Griselda is eager and willing to learn, but her reactions to the cuckoo's attempts to feed her information about astronomy read like a 'realistic' parody of the old lesson-book pattern.

At one level, it is also psychologically appropriate that Griselda can express in her dream-phantasies the irritation with adults which she keeps in check for most of her waking life.

Griselda then, is both exemplary and realistic, both psychologically convincing and the vehicle of a vision of childhood which Mrs Molesworth thought suitable for children. And indeed, in the context of the tradition of child characterisation, Griselda marks what is in some sense a turning-point. In Frances Browne's Granny's Wonderful Chair (1855), Snowflower, the little peasant girl, had been innocently dignified, able to take her place at court with neither shyness nor forwardness. In 1865 Alice moved through Wonderland and in 1871 through Looking Glass Land, dignified, courteous, losing her temper only at the end of her long and troubled journeys. In later Alice imitations, Alice's self-confidence degenerated into mere pertness and downright rudeness: in 1877, Griselda was beginning to show flashes of spirit with the cuckoo in her dream, though otherwise the model of childish virtue; in 1888, in Clara Bradford's Ethel's Adventures in the Doll Country, Ethel's downright rudeness with her dream-guide the birch rod was still divested of its sting by its

occurring in a dream; and by 1892 Miss Mary, heroine of J.C. Atkinson's Scenes in Fairyland, could quarrel with her guide even outside her dreams, for her dream guide is a mysterious old gentleman, Mr Greenbeard, who is still more like a playfellow than a guardian adult. In 1906 in the revised version of Sara Crewe (1888), Frances Hodgson Burnett could dispense with the need for a dream frame by having a little girl turn roundly on her snobbish, worldly teacher. The teacher was in the wrong, and Sara's rudeness is presented as justified. Sixty years later, the rude child needs no justification: today, the heroine of Louise Fitzhugh's Harriet the Spy (1964) is unashamedly contemptuous of adults. The ideal of childish submission has disappeared. Though Mrs Molesworth wrote The Cuckoo Clock with a moral purpose, the very elements that were to make Griselda acceptable as a realistic child character carried within them the seeds which were to blossom later into, not a model child, but what would have been unthinkable with Mrs Molesworth, the totally rebellious child, whose rebelliousness is justified on the grounds that it is explained.

c. The Optimistic Vision

I have so far been dealing with the primary virtue of submission to adults. There remains the optimistic attitude which the book must justify and convey, together with the moral problem that the child must solve. Griselda's moral problem is how to react to the circumstances in which she has been placed and her resultant undeserved loneliness. For her, 'the sad things, and the sorry things, and the perplexing things' of life are her psychological and physical deprivations, which are no fault of hers or of anybody else. And she submits to her circumstances patiently. She is aware of her problems, mentioning some of them to Dorcas and the cuckoo, but she is not a morbidly introspective child, so she does not make much of them.

Griselda is no fool, hers is not a cloistered and fugitive virtue, and her patience is at least a partly conscious optimistic way of dealing with her circumstances. Her lapses from virtue are basically only lapses of conduct, which do not disguise the fact that she never submits to despair. The optimism conveyed by Griselda's way of dealing with her circumstances raises three points.

First, Chapter II is headed 'Impatient Griselda'. Here Griselda complains to her aunt about the hardness of her lessons, and reacts violently to them by throwing the book at the clock. It would appear that the author is ironically underlining the difference between this Griselda and her namesake. However, this is not the whole case. The child Griselda is reacting impatiently, complainingly, and violently, not to all the undeserved circumstances of her life, but to a particular, deserved, aspect of it. The author is using superficial irony to make the point that at a deeper level, the child Griselda is like the original Patient Griselda of the medieval exemplum, which is also a folk tale.[1]

Patient Griselda's optimistic attitude was tested by depriving her of all important human relationships. Her husband turns away from her, and her children are taken away from her. The most trying point of her life comes when her husband, in relation to whom she defines her existence, apparently decides to marry again. The child Griselda's optimistic attitude is tested in the same way: she too is deprived of the most important human relationships: her mother who dies, her father who leaves her, and her brothers whom she has to leave. Her ultimate test is when, after thinking that she has at last found a playmate, she is threatened that this playmate will be taken away from her.

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1. Tale Type 887, based on Motif H 461: Test of Wife's Patience, and more loosely on Motif H 1553: Test of Patience, according to the classification of Thompson, Motif-Index ..., op.cit.

The Cuckoo Clock does not merely refer to the Patient Griselda story. Metaphorically speaking, it is the Patient Griselda story retold, varying the superficial characteristics such as the age of the protagonist and the exact relationships from which she is isolated. The folklorist William Bettridge, who has studied the Patient Griselda story in depth most recently,[1] points out that

> ... a great many women are called "Griselda types" who are not in fact. The essence of Griselda is not that she is calumniated against (many female characters fall into this category) .... Rather, she must be calumniated against because of a tabu which she does not violate. This may have some bearing on Mrs Molesworth's little girl.[2]

Mrs Molesworth's Griselda, like Patient Griselda, suffers not because she violates any adult interdiction, but undeservedly. She suffers not because she is impatient or naughty, but precisely because she is patient and submissive. It is interesting to speculate on what would have happened if Griselda had complained to her great-aunts of her lack of a companion and play: it is certain that the events of The Cuckoo Clock would not follow the pattern that they do, nor point the same moral.

Second, it is subtly implied that Griselda's circumstances do not change fortuitously, which is in fact the case, but that the change is

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1. Bettridge, William Edwin, Griselda: Aarne-Thompson Tale Type 887: Analogues of Chaucer's Clerk's Tale, Ohio State University Ph.D. thesis, 1966. Dr Bettridge examines sixty examples of this Tale Type, literary and folk, and concludes that they all derive from Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Chaucer. All modern versions of the Tale Type come from Northern Europe, and it is wholly absent from the Mediterranean lands where Boccaccio and Petrarch wrote it down.

Mrs Molesworth's exact source for her adaptation of the Tale Type is irrelevant, but it was probably Chaucer or an oral English version.

2. Bettridge, in a letter to me dated 4 Oct., 1978. He says that 'Your idea sounds quite interesting ...', and does not reject it, which is encouraging.

a result of her optimistic patience and fortitude.

At the beginning of Chapter 8, in which Griselda meets Phil, but before this occurs, there is a short summary of Griselda's attitudes to life:

> Griselda became more and more convinced that the only way as yet discovered of getting through hard tasks is to set to work and do them; also, that grumbling, as things are arranged in this world, does not always, nor may I say often, do good; furthermore, that an ill-tempered child is not, on the whole, likely to be as much loved as a good tempered one; lastly, that if you wait long enough, winter will go and spring will come.[1]
>
> (p. 129)

Here, Mrs Molesworth is conflating the two distinct but related issues of submission ('obeying orders') and the optimistic attitude to circumstances expressed in waiting patiently for change.

Griselda's conviction that winter will go and spring will come can be taken on two levels. It can imply that she realised that waiting for the winter of hard circumstances to pass means that ultimately the spring of better ones will come. It would be absurd to suggest that Griselda did not know that seasons change, and the metaphorical reading is invited. Interestingly, Mrs Molesworth confuses the literal and metaphorical levels immediately after devoting a long paragraph to the actual arrival of spring. It is implied that there is a causal connection between the waiting and the arrival of spring, that one depends on the other: if you wait ... then winter will go. This is again absurd at the literal level but satisfactory at the metaphorical level (if you wait long enough, without doing anything violent, then hard circumstances will change for the better). The implication that patient waiting brings circumstances altered for the better is supported by the fact that Griselda's moving out into the garden is the natural

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1. See also p. 168 of this thesis, for the implications of this sentence.

consequence of waiting for the literal spring which alters her circumstances: she gains physical freedom, a playmate with whom she is allowed to play, and a surrogate mother — Phil's mother. It is implied that the natural consequence of waiting for the metaphorical spring brought the literal spring with all these benefits in tow.

Hence, The Cuckoo Clock implies that optimism is justified by the way in which the world is organised. Circumstances change with the inevitability of the seasons, and all that is needed is optimism to tide one through the hard period.

Third, it should be noticed that Griselda meets Phil after she has realised that grumbling about her lessons does no good. Just before she meets Phil,

> Griselda had been all the morning at her lessons, and had tried very hard, and done them very well, and now she felt as if she deserved some reward.
>
> (p. 133)

At this level, her meeting Phil is not part of an inevitable process, but a reward arranged by the cuckoo who approves of her establishment in the primary virtue. Though she does not see him, she hears his call, and Phil is quite sure that the cuckoo meant him to be her playmate (pp. 140, 144). Here is a world which is arranged so that everything works towards the best, where present hardships need only be temporarily endured with grace, where a conscious effort at establishing an inherent virtue is rewarded by a benevolent power that directs fortuitous occurrences to positive ends.

Mrs Molesworth conveys her moral vision by balancing the ideal and the 'realistic' child through the use of the fallible model; and by contriving the happy ending, making it seem both inevitable and a reward for goodness. These are fairly simple techniques, and The Cuckoo Clock may seem unsubtle and overdone when analysed in this manner. Nevertheless, the excellence of the way in which the moral

point of the novel is conveyed (irrespective of whether we agree on the validity of the moral point and the necessity to convey it) is apparent when we compare it with other, 'moral' fantasy fiction of the period. In the Alice imitations, the protagonist could serve as an 'awful example', barely escaping grave retribution for his faults. Examples are Mrs Ewing's 'Benjy in Beastland', which preaches kindness to animals, or Tom Hood's From Nowhere to the North Pole, which preaches against wanton destruction. Alternatively, the protagonist could be shown the awful example and be sent on allegorical journeys which demonstrated the dangers of succumbing to temptation, as in Speaking Likenesses (in which the first story warns against anger) or Down the Snow Stairs (in which the perils of sensual delights are shown).

Unlike these, The Cuckoo Clock does not only warn the reader against various acts but also inculcates a certain attitude which, if adopted, will automatically deter one from those acts. Griselda herself is aware that it is not the learning of her lessons that is important, but her attitude to them. That is, not what she is learning, but why she is learning. She tells Phil that the cuckoo says that there is a great deal to learn before one can reach fairyland, and that though learning to read will help, it is not that sort of learning he means, but rather, learning to be good (p. 141). Being good is of course learning to be submissive, with all its corollaries. In teaching Phil the virtues of truthfulness and submission to his nurse, and neatness, as well as how to read, she is serving as the model of virtue, fallible but good, for him and for the child reader.

It may seem to us that the rationale behind the virtue of submission to adults and to circumstances, is the very Victorian desire to keep the child submissive so that it will be easily controlled in childhood, and retain the habits of submission to authority and unquestioning acceptance as an adult, thus maintaining the status quo

in society. Though the book seems to operate in this way, it is probable that Mrs Molesworth did not consciously formulate this reason. But children's literature is always conservative, the literature that upholds the values of the society that produced it, since it is the literature which the adult thinks suitable for the child to have.

d. Childhood: mystery, imaginative insight, being and becoming

Today, when submission and patience are no longer shibboleths, it is obvious that The Cuckoo Clock's being in print is not a result of its implied ideology. Interestingly, in the book, the stated incentive for being good is the reward of reaching the 'real fairyland', not the maintenance of society. The 'real fairyland' is such a vague concept that the book has not dated as obviously as if the incentive had been redolent of Victorian Christianity: 'Christian children all must be, Mild, obedient, good as He' — the hymn omits only hard work!

This point is illustrated by comparing The Cuckoo Clock with a now unread book which might have been its model, so marked are their resemblances. In Countess Kate (1862) by Charlotte Yonge, Kate is an orphan, like Griselda. She comes to live with two old great-aunts, one of whom is a submissive invalid, and the other domineering. She has no playmates and longs for the days when she was with her cousins. She has a governess to whom she cannot accommodate herself, and irksome lessons to do. She is hasty-tempered and spirited. She is gradually established in such virtues as obedience and self-discipline. At the end of the book she is rewarded with playmates and more acceptable surrogate parents. But the means by which she moves towards ideal virtue and the reason for her accepting these means are both specifically Christian. Her uncle, a clergyman, tells her to have the faith to endure her trials and to learn to obey, and she accepts

submission as a religious duty, and through a religious medium. Like Griselda, Kate is imaginative, and steeped in imaginative fiction. But for her, the imagination is not a refuge as it is for Griselda: her imaginative outlet of phantasising that she is a storybook heroine is scoffed at both by the author and by the other characters. Griselda's phantasies are the product, not only of her deprivation, but of her imaginative belief in the fairy lore that she has found in her reading. For Charlotte Yonge, faith, not imagination, was the tool by which and the reason for which virtue was established. For Mrs Molesworth, imagination and the imaginative experience (Griselda's fancyings by day which pave the way for her dreaming at night) have replaced any specifically religious element.

But there is indeed an element of self-conscious Christian 'mystery' in The Cuckoo Clock, corresponding to qualities in Four Winds Farm and The Children of the Castle which lead Roger Lancelyn Green to refer to

> [the] depth of vision and the underlying allegory that gives strength and mystery to what are, on the surface, sufficiently exciting tales to enchant most children.[1]

In The Cuckoo Clock, fortunately, these elements are muted. It is hinted that there is a 'real fairyland', a coy euphemism for a Christian Heaven, behind and beyond the Wonderlands to which Griselda goes. Before her visit to the Mandarins, Griselda asks the cuckoo to take her to fairyland. He says he cannot do that, few children have been there, and they found their own way; there are many doors, but Griselda need not waste time looking for them (p. 55).

Nevertheless, Griselda still persists in thinking that the real fairyland is easily accessible. She mistakes Butterfly Land for

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1. Green, Tellers of Tales, op.cit., p. 113.

fairyland, and again asks the cuckoo to take her to the real fairyland on her last journey (pp. 110, 165). She gradually gets bored with the make-believe lands she has been taken to (pp. 78, 127, 165). She realises for herself that this real fairyland can be reached only by individual effort and by being 'good', and she tells Phil this when he wants to look for and get to fairyland himself (pp. 139, 141). When he thinks he has found the way there she smiles, saying, '"I'm afraid the way to fairyland isn't so easily found"' (p. 187). And right at the end of the book, when Phil's mother smilingly asks the pair whether they found the fairyland they were looking for:

> Griselda shook her head as she replied —
> "Phil doesn't understand yet," she said gently. "He isn't old enough. The way to the true fairyland is hard to find, and we must each find it for ourselves, mustn't we?"
> She looked up in the lady's face as she spoke, and saw that she understood.
> "Yes, dear child," she answered softly, and perhaps a very little sadly. "But Phil and you may help each other, and I perhaps may help you both."
> (p. 195)

This is relatively restrained, and in no way offensive. But it is clear that Mrs Molesworth meant the reader to see Griselda's Wonderlands as stages in her spiritual and mental growth, and that this growth had a Christian flavour to it. One of the epigraphs to The Cuckoo Clock, opposite the title-page, reads:

> ... just as any little child has been guided towards the true paradise by its fairy dreams of bliss.[1]

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1. Mrs Molesworth ascribes this to E.A. Abbott, the mathematician, Shakespearean scholar and clergyman, now mainly remembered by his fantasy novel about mathematics, Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions. Since he wrote for Macmillan, Mrs Molesworth might have known him personally. It is certain that she was impressed by the passage from which the epigraph to The Cuckoo Clock was taken, since Ruth Robertson tells me that in her commonplace-book she copied the lines —

> Each day sees some dream-bubble burst, some illusion vanish: but the spirit of hope which has been fed by these illusions remains .... The childish dreams and illusions are so many angels sent down to lure them towards the eternal father and the eternal Home ... as certainly as any little child has been guided towards the true Paradise by its fairy dreams of bliss.

After the quotation is the pencilled comment ''Tis true'. Since none of the works of Abbott available in Australia are the source of this passage, I have been unable to trace it.

Again, Mrs Molesworth stressed that fantasy fiction was worthwhile by asserting that a higher 'reality' lay behind its apparent 'unreality':

> Save in an occasional flight to fairyland (and is true fairyland unreal after all?) children's stories should be real ....[1]

However, Mrs Molesworth was to get shriller and shriller about the distinction between the real and false fairylands. In The Magic Nuts, for example, Leonora continually discusses the matter at length with her governess, her playmate, and her fairy godmother. She is aware from the start of the distinction between the two, not brought to any awareness of it. Again, in The Ruby Ring, the fairy godmother reveals herself to be an angelic figure, and tells Sybil that the kind of fairyland Sybil is thinking of is not difficult to get into, as opposed to her own fairyland. In The Cuckoo Clock, the cuckoo refuses to call himself a fairy, but says that he might be a fairyfied cuckoo (p. 37). But he is not explicitly or crudely shown to be a messenger of a spiritual power. His words can thus be construed as ironic: he has been fairyfied by Griselda's imagination.

Similarly, when Griselda is shown that death is not to be feared, she is not offered the consolations of faith. Instead, when she sees Sybilla's funeral taking place, she sees a beautiful spring day, and hears a song, more beautiful than the cuckoo's. She takes this to be Sybilla singing (p. 86). Death is beautiful, with its associations of spring and harmony. Again, as with the real fairyland, Mrs Molesworth derives her secular consolation from a religious source: the trite image of the Heavenly Choir.

Occasionally, Mrs Molesworth wrote a story in which she presented a specifically religious element, like the miracle in 'The Story of a Sermon', or the millenial vision in 'Charlie's Disappointment' (Tell

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1. 'On the Art ...', op.cit., p. 341.

Me A Story), when she descended into bathos. Her Stories of the Saints for Children (1892), and Stories in Illustration of the Lord's Prayer (1897) reveal an ordinary Anglican Broad Church stance, but have nothing noteworthy about them. In fantasy novels like The Children of the Castle or Christmas Tree Land she 'hovers on the brink of something specifically Christian, but dares not quite take the plunge' with the result that her characters are neither allegorical nor religious, and the books are failures.[1] The Cuckoo Clock is saved from bathos, undistinguished Anglicanism, and imperfect allegory because the Christian or 'mystical' element is kept very much in the background. It is really the role of the imagination in the growth of the child that is important both to maintain psychological stability, and act as a factor in its development.

For Mrs Molesworth, childhood was a period marked by the imagination. She tended to portray a certain sort of imaginative child in her fiction. She looked with approval on Mrs Ewing's Jan of the Windmill, which depicts 'the growth ... of an artist nature', and says that this artist-type is more common among children than generally thought, citing 'Wordsworth, Gray and others'.[2] Most of Mrs Molesworth's most attractive child characters are 'artist types' in the sense that they invent for themselves a life of the imagination, often based on their reading. Sometimes as with Peterkin, or Dods (Greyling Towers) or the children of The Palace in the Garden, they make their lives conform to the fictions they invent: they expect 'storybook' adventures to occur, and occur they do. Sometimes, as in the fantasy novels, adventures involve the suspension of physical law,

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1. Bull, Angela, in Avery, Nineteenth Century Children, op.cit., p. 62.

2. 'Juliana Horatia Ewing', op.cit., p. 510.

and may be seen as occurring in the minds of the characters, though this is left equivocal.

Mrs Molesworth's best portrayal of an 'artist nature' is that of Gratian Conyfer, hero of Four Winds Farm, whose story is a variation of that of the deprived child. He has fantasy adventures because his sensitivity and imaginativeness set him apart from his peers, even though he is not physically confined nor orphaned. His phantasies are centred upon the winds, since his home is windswept. The only other contemporary fantasy novel dealing with an 'artist nature' which is comparable is Charles Leland's little-known Johnnykin and the Goblins.[1]

For Mrs Molesworth, the imagination of the child was a useful tool. Griselda can use it in conscious 'fancy' and unconscious phantasising. Both ways, she makes up for her deprivations and needs. It aids her mental growth, for she learns during her fantasy adventures; her moral growth, for it establishes her in virtue; and her spiritual growth, for through it she is given inklings about the true paradise. Mrs Molesworth implies that all children have this faculty in some degree: Sybilla had some special relationship with the cuckoo, Phil knows the cuckoo too (pp. 135-140, 163), and other children besides Griselda have been to Butterfly Land and to the moon (pp. 120, 167, 177).

But the imagination has to be left behind: not only does Griselda get bored with the various lands she goes to, but after she has met Phil and his mother, and anticipates meeting his father, the cuckoo says goodbye to her, in what is 'merely a dream, nothing else' (p. 195). He tells her that she will need him no longer, for her new human friends will understand her, help her to work and to play, and that they will

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1. It appears that Johnnykin was a favourite of the Edwardian satirist 'Saki'.

be better friends than the mandarins, butterflies or even himself (pp. 195-196). Griselda has moved from deprivation to fulfilment, and is also leaving the life of the imagination behind. The imagination was a legitimate refuge while it lasted, it must be outgrown.

In a sense this outgrowing of imagination is also an outgrowing of childhood itself. The Georgians had misunderstood the principles of Rousseau, as exemplified in his Emile (1789). He had seen childhood as a precious state not to be tampered with, but allowed to educate itself by experience. For his English disciple, Thomas Day, the actual learning began much earlier, though childhood was still a sacred state. And the bulk of Georgian writers for children had seen childhood as an inevitable step on the way to adulthood, to be got over as soon as possible. Writers like Mrs Trimmer were less rationally non-sectarian than the Edgeworths, while Mrs Sherwood preached hell-fire and damnation. But they all saw childhood as a period of intense preparation and learning, and imaginative literature and, by implication, the imaginative faculty itself were severely frowned upon. One recalls the reinforcing influence of Utilitarianism, and the 'anti-wonder' attitude of the Gradgrindian menage. But in the Victorian period, the Romantic vision of childhood began to penetrate fiction: childhood in the works of, say, Dickens and George Eliot is seen to be in some way a blessed state, not a mere period of intense preparation.

Mrs Molesworth's attitude represents a balance between that of the excesses of the Georgians and the excesses of the Romantic ideal. Childhood is good, in some ways the younger the child the better the child. Phil is younger than Griselda, and in some ways better than her. He is more a child of nature than she is, and more responsive to nature (pp. 143, 163, 188). The epigraph to the chapter in which he appears begins: 'Who comes from the world of flowers?' (p. 128).

Griselda is taken to the moon by the cuckoo, but Phil can find his way there by himself. He appears with bright eyes and silvery wings, rowing the boat that will take Griselda home. He fades away, and the cuckoo comforts Griselda by saying that '"Phil's all right, and in some ways he has a great deal more sense than you"' (p. 180). On one level, Phil's appearing twice in the same dream indicates Griselda's intense interest in the playmate she has found at last, but his appearance in quasi-angelic form indicates that he is on a higher spiritual level than the older child.

Phil speaks in baby-talk, the Victorian predilection for the phonetic representation of which has been dismissed as a 'disease' in the twentieth century, which has a particular aversion to it.[1] Marghanita Laski calls the use of it 'one of Mrs Molesworth's most trying little tricks'.[2] However, even the speech of Lewis Carroll's Bruno, often and mercilessly maligned today, was praised by a contemporary as 'real'.[3] Perhaps there is more to baby talk than pretty-pretty sentimentality. In The Reign of Wonder (1965) Tony Tanner showed that when the Americans needed a different perspective and a new idiom, they found the one in the naive, childish vision, and the other in the non-standard vernacular.[4] The two are seen together in Huckleberry Finn, the non-adult hero of which sees things 'differently', and expresses what he sees in a non-standard idiom. George Eliot's children in The Scenes of Clerical Life and Adam Bede speak non-standard baby-talk, perhaps precisely to convey the difference of their mode of being from that of the adult. Interestingly enough, later,

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1. Green, Tellers of Tales, op.cit., p. 61.

2. Laski, op.cit., p. 64.

3. Collingwood, S. Dodgson, The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll (1898), Nelson, London, n.d., p. 236.

4. Tanner, Tony, The Reign of Wonder: Naivety and Reality in American Literature (1965), Harper and Row, New York, 1967.

Kipling used a version of baby-talk to express a dog's viewpoint in the pieces in Thy Servant a Dog. 'Infant' comes from 'infans', 'the one who does not speak', and perhaps when the infant Phil is unable to speak 'properly', this is Mrs Molesworth's way of communicating her Romantic vision that he is not inferior, but knows things that need a special language to express them.

Phil is thus superior to Griselda. On the other hand, though he loves his mother (pp. 138, 142), is sensitive to Griselda's loss (pp. 138, 194), respects Griselda's greater age, learning and virtue (pp. 138, 139, 141), realises his own ignorance and is eager to learn more (p. 141) and is grateful and submissive — all qualities that Griselda herself has as well — he is amoral and willing to deceive his nurse, though he is ready to learn better (p. 143). He is also much more naïve than she about fairyland, taking it as a real place which he can find (pp. 139, 140, 141, 144, 187-189). This indicates that childhood is a blessed state in one way, but that the child must be educated, gently but firmly, playing on his desire to please those he loves, in those virtues which will fit him for adulthood. Griselda becomes Phil's teacher and mother-figure, standing in the same relation to him as the cuckoo had stood to her. Growing up is the gradual establishment of inherent virtue, also a matter of leaving behind the childish imagination with its power to conjure up living images. It is not a matter of corruption: Griselda is not Phil's corrupter, as the cuckoo is not Griselda's corrupter.

Nevertheless, there is a hint of Romantic nostalgia about childhood. When the cuckoo finally leaves Griselda, she awakes with her pillow wet with tears.

> Thus many stories end. She was happy, very happy in the thought of her kind new friends; but there were tears for the one she felt she had said farewell to, even though he was only a cuckoo in a clock.
>
> (p. 196)

The regions of fancy which are open to childhood are closed for Griselda, who has moved a step further to maturity. This is both a loss and a gain. The attitude to childhood in this novel is very Wordsworthian: the child is in a way the 'best philosopher', but the adult has his own compensations. He cannot see the 'glory and the dream' with the unclouded imaginative faculty of childhood, but adulthood has brought with it 'the faith that looks through death' and the 'years that bring the philosophic mind'. At the end of the book, Griselda has forfeited her imaginative life, but moved on to the faith of wanting to find the real fairyland by herself.

In taking this attitude, Mrs Molesworth was avoiding the excesses of nostalgia for childhood which was to characterise the opening of the new century. At the end of the nineteenth century, Kenneth Grahame saw a complete split between childhood and adulthood, with no possibility of any communication between children and the Olympians. With the new century, Peter Pan was created, the boy who will never grow up, and so was Christopher Robin, who will always be playing with his bear in some corner of the forest. The Darling children are imaginative, giving the illusion of reality to their play about Indians and pirates. Christopher Robin imbues objects, his toys, with life. Like Griselda, they are imaginative, and they are children. Unlike Griselda, they can surrender neither imagination, nor childhood, which become a refuge from adulthood. For Griselda, her fantasy adventures serve the function of a pastoral, they provide refuge, strength, and enhanced wisdom. For Peter Pan (though not for the Darling children) and Christopher Robin, the Never-Never Land of Childhood becomes an Arden from which there is no return.

For the mid- or late-Victorian Mrs Molesworth, however, childhood was a period of growth, a state of becoming rather than being. As a result, The Cuckoo Clock, a secular Pilgrim's Progress, can best be

characterised as a sort of Bildungsroman, a truncated version of one of the many novels in a particular mode which developed in the nineteenth century. Jerome Buckley sees the Bildungsroman as in part the literary result of the Romantic conception of the child as 'an entity in himself responsive to experiences that might alter the direction of his growing mind and eventually influence for better or for worse his whole maturity'.[1] He calls it 'the novel of youth' and 'the novel of education', taking youth to mean 'not so much a state of being as a process of movement and adjustment from childhood to early maturity' and education as 'a growing up and gradual self-discovery in the school without walls that is experience'.[2]

The above seems a perfect description of The Cuckoo Clock. Though the book spans only one year, that year is crucial in the life of its protagonist. The duration described in the novel is the period Griselda suffers without parents or siblings, whom she had before the novel begins and whom she will metaphorically recover as it ends. It is the duration of the testing and education of Griselda. The novel is, as it were, the story of the time of a psychological quest, not for an object, but for the ability to come to terms with life's troubles, and to find a meaning in it. In less abstract terms, this achieved ability is that of being consistently 'good', and the meaning of life becomes clearer when it is seen as the search for the 'real fairyland'. Though Griselda's future progress through her later childhood and adolescence is not mapped out, it is clear that she has found her bearings, and will continue to proceed on the path she has discovered. In the last lines of Carrots, her first novel for children, Mrs

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1. Buckley, Jerome Hamilton, Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding, Harvard U.P., Cambridge, Mass., 1974, p. 36.

2. Ibid., p. viii.

Molesworth found it necessary to spell out that the child Carrots was to be the father of the man:

> If any of you know a very good, kind, gentle, brave man — so good that he cannot but be kind; so brave that he cannot but be gentle, I should like you to think that, perhaps, whatever he is — clergyman, doctor, soldier, sailor, it doesn't matter in the least — perhaps when that man was a boy, he was my little Carrots. Especially if he has large "doggy-looking", brown eyes, and hair that once might have been called "red".[1]

In The Cuckoo Clock, she does not need to point out that the child Griselda is mother to the woman in the same way.

If The Cuckoo Clock is a Bildungsroman, the classification as such is illuminating for a number of reasons. This is not merely a convenient categorisation, but also in a sense an indication of quality. If one of the marks of a good novel is the consistency with which a character is portrayed, and a depiction of a development which does not strike the reader as forced or contrived, The Cuckoo Clock is a good book, in a way that most Alice imitations are not. The moral lessons that Benjy or Flora or Kitty learn are too pat to carry conviction,[2] and the books do not depict a gradual maturation which goes deep, but rather a superficial change in behaviour. The change cannot be other than superficial, for the protagonist is seen only for the duration of the one dream-journey, and the characters are not portrayed in

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1. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, 'Carrots': Just a Little Boy, Macmillan, London, 1876, p. 241. Occasionally, Mrs Molesworth gave the reader a glimpse of the later lives of her protagonists. The children of Grandmother Dear reappear for a moment in A Christmas Posy, Judy in Tell Me A Story reappears in The Ruby Ring, but though she occasionally seems to promise sequels — as in The Tapestry Room — these never appear.

2. Hero and heroines of Mrs Ewing's 'Benjy in Beastland' (1870), Christina Rossetti's Speaking Likenesses (1874), and Alice Corkran's Down the Snow Stairs (1887) respectively. They respectively learn not to be rough with their toys, the value of good temper, and the use of self-sacrifice.

depth to begin with. Or, in a case like Miss Mary's[1] (who like Griselda goes several times to various Never-Never-Lands), the growth is merely asserted, never depicted. Miss Mary is suddenly told that she is too old to come to fairyland any more. But the Miss Mary of the beginning of the book is the same Miss Mary as at the end, whereas it is quite clear that the Griselda of the end of The Cuckoo Clock, though not radically altered, differs from the Griselda of the beginning in more than just her learning to control her temper better than before. Perhaps one of the reasons why Enid Blyton's books are looked upon with disfavour is that in her endless series, the children undergo experiences which leave no perceptible mark on them.

Mrs Molesworth herself was never to write another novel that could qualify as a Bildungsroman: none of them shows any gradual maturation of any character. Her fantasy novels generally depict a short time-span and though the protagonists are often 'improved', this improvement often seems more like sudden and violent conversion than gradual maturation. In The Ruby Ring and The Children of the Castle respectively, for instance, Sybil and Bertram are flawed in more or less the same way as Griselda, but the means by which they reform are much more violent: Sybil nearly loses her soul to the fairies, and Bertram suffers physical agonies after looking into the eyes of the Fairy Forget-me-not. Even that most gushing of Molesworth admirers, Swinburne, found Bertram unconvincing as a characterisation. He said that he found him 'too bad for conversion'.[2] No one would say the same of Griselda, in contrast, and indeed, her occasional tart responses to the cuckoo's preaching are both attractive and convincing.

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1. Heroine of J.C. Atkinson's Scenes in Fairyland, or, Miss Mary's Visits to the Court of Fairy Realm (1892).

2. Swinburne, A.C., The Swinburne Letters, ed. Cecil Y. Lang, Yale U.P., New Haven, 1962, Vol. 6, p. 1.

Mrs Molesworth's non-fantasy novels tend to be flawed in much the same manner — Carrots is really a series of vignettes, not a unified novel. She tended to make use of 'realistic' methods to bring about conversions, but these methods are as drastic as those mentioned above. For instance, in The Rectory Children and Jasper respectively, Bridget and Chrissie see that the consequences of their self-willed and careless behaviour endanger the lives of their father and brother. Sweet Content, in the novel of that name, sees her friends nearly lose a sizable inheritance because of her arrogant behaviour to their rich and eccentric great-aunt.

In contrast to these novels, Griselda's maturation is both gradual and convincing. Her fantasy adventures are the natural consequence of her deprived circumstances, and because Mrs Molesworth did not approve of the portrayal of overly introspective children, the change in Griselda is not due to any kind of morbid emotional condition. The Cuckoo Clock, in portraying gradual, continuous and not violent change, tends to rise above mere didacticism. The model child develops along the 'right' lines, but the rate and the means of her development are not overly contrived or pointed.

e. The Novel as Bildungsroman

The classification of The Cuckoo Clock as a Bildungsroman, a novel of education rather than conversion, also indicates that the best children's books are not written in isolation, but are part of a general tradition of writing. Though the theme of growing up may be presented in a more naïve and simple manner than in adult novels, The Cuckoo Clock has the same characteristics as many of the greater adult novels of the nineteenth century, and Griselda seems worthy to take her place with David, Pip, Maggie Tulliver and Ernest Pontifex. Dr Buckley examines great Bildungsromane and arrives at a list of characteristics

of the tradition. Bildungsromane are marked by 'childhood, the conflict of generations, provinciality, the larger society, self-education, alienation, ordeal by love, the search for a vocation, and a working philosophy'.[1] Further, 'the growing child, as he appears in these novels, more often than not will be orphaned ....'[2] Griselda is a virtual orphan. She experiences an alienation from the old world of her great-aunts. When Miss Grizzel's old-fashioned values make her feel that it is not desirable that Griselda should play with a boy, there is a muted conflict of generations. Since the living cuckoo is Griselda's own mental creation, it may be said that she educates her self in a very real sense, albeit unconsciously. She finds her vocation in teaching Phil.[3] She arrives at the working philosophy that one must be very good and search for the real fairyland by oneself. At the end of the book she moves from the provinciality of the restricted society of her aunts and godmother in the country to the larger society of

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1. Buckley, op.cit., p. 18.

2. Ibid., p. 19.

3. As Griselda and Phil together represent a model for the child reader, so Griselda, the girl, is a model for Phil, the boy. Lionel Trilling suggested that as in the eighteenth century the noble savage stood as a model for men, so in the nineteenth century, his place was taken by woman (Matthew Arnold, Columbia U.P., New York, 1939, p. 128). In a recent essay, Carol Christ offers an interesting hypothesis that in the Victorian period Woman stood as a model for men, and that this implied both an idealisation of woman and a more feminine ideal of the virtuous male, who incorporates the traditionally feminine virtues such as submission, kindness, gentleness and chastity ('Victorian Masculinity and the Angel in the House', in A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women, ed. Martha Vicinus, Indiana U.P., Bloomington etc., 1977, pp. 146-162). In Mrs Molesworth's work, the pattern of the female as a model for the male appears fairly often: Carrots, The Cuckoo Clock, The Oriel Window, The Boys and I, Little Miss Peggy are good examples. And when it is the little boy who is the model, his virtues are basically the same. Indeed Jack, in The Girls and I, describes his sisters as boyish, and himself as the 'other way'. However, it would be dangerous to carry this idea too far with regard to The Cuckoo Clock, since Griselda is Phil's teacher and model not just because she is a girl, but because she is also older than him.

Phil's townbred family.[1] The only element that is lacking is the ordeal by love, and this the ages of the protagonists and Victorian ideas regarding what children show know about these matters inhibit from appearing in the novel. Dr Buckley also mentions that the Bildungsroman has as one of its origins the medieval allegory,[2] and the alignment with the medieval exemplum is made clear in the story of the new Griselda.

There is one other point in which The Cuckoo Clock resembles the Bildungsroman. Dr Buckley indicates that all great Bildungsromane seem to take as their raw material the author's own experience.[3] Mrs Molesworth herself advised the aspiring author of children's books to use 'remembrances of childhood ... of one's own inner childish life' and perspectives, to put her in touch with the child world.[4] Edward Salmon praised Mrs Molesworth's 'novels of child life' because they were rooted in her own experience.[5] Mrs Molesworth once made the statement that

> The first stories I published were not so much invention as narrative — the telling, I mean, of real stories — with, of course, some little alterations.[6]

The Cuckoo Clock was Mrs Molesworth's third book for children, and counts as one of these 'first stories'. However, there is an ambiguity in the statement I quoted: did Mrs Molesworth mean that the stories

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1. This enlargement of her horizons is paralleled in the later novels by Gratian going out to see the world at the end of Four Winds Farm, Bertram being taken off to be a sailor in The Children of the Castle, or the children of An Enchanted Garden leaving their restricted confines and loneliness for the seaside and the larger world.

2. Buckley, op.cit., p. 13.

3. Ibid., p. 23.

4. 'On the Art ...', op.cit., p. 345.

5. Salmon, op.cit., p. 60.

6. 'How I Write ...', op.cit., p. 17.

she wrote down were narrative in the sense that she had told them to real children before putting them on paper, or did she mean that they were accounts of incidents that had really happened, which she altered for the sake of art? I am inclined to think that The Cuckoo Clock is the fictionalised account of something that had really happened to Mrs Molesworth, and that it was the second artistic version, the first being 'The Reel Fairies', which is more directly autobiographical. The heroine of 'The Reel Fairies' is called Louisa, which was Mrs Molesworth's middle name.[1] Tell Me A Story (1876), in which the story appeared, was published under the pseudonym of Ennis Graham, so presumably Mrs Molesworth felt less inhibited about using her middle name. And in an essay of reminiscences, Mrs Molesworth talks about how she used to play with reels in her mother's workbox, though she does not explicitly say that she was the Louisa of her own story.[2] As I have shown, the story is an earlier, cruder, version of the novel. With regard to The Cuckoo Clock itself, Roger Lancelyn Green states that the clock hung in the nursery of Mrs Molesworth's own children.[3] However, in 1906 Mrs Molesworth told an interviewer that

> the ever-delightful "Cuckoo Clock" ... was taken from a clock possessed by the authoress herself, and the Japanese cabinet belonged to her sister — a wonderful specimen, with steps, and cupboards within cupboards, and mandarins standing about. Mrs Molesworth always thought as a child how delightful it would be to climb inside.[4]

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1. The entry for Mrs Molesworth in The Art of Authorship: Personally Contributed by Leading Authors of the Day (1890), ed. George Bainton, Appleton and Co, New York, 1891, pp. 93-96, is under the heading of Louisa Molesworth, not Mary Louisa Molesworth; and some of the stories which she contributed to Nister's Holiday Annual are under the name of 'L. Molesworth'. She appears to have gone under her middle name.

2. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, 'Story-Writing', The Monthly Packet (4th Series), Aug. 1894, pp. 161-162.

3. Green, Tellers of Tales, op.cit., p. 110.

4. Woolf, op.cit., p. 675.

Mrs Molesworth herself reminisced of two cabinets — one of her own and another one, much larger, in the house of a relation. She thought 'these are answerable for [her] little story of "The Nodding Mandarins", and for some parts of "The Cuckoo Clock"'.[1] Whoever the clock and the mandarins actually belonged to, it seems evident that some real object inspired the adventures of Griselda in the novel.

If Griselda is Louisa Stewart, who grew up to be Mrs Molesworth, Phil is clearly a reworking of Carrots, who Mrs Molesworth admitted was drawn from her own son.[2] Carrots was the progenitor of what Gillian Avery calls Mrs Molesworth's own ideal child, 'the little friend of all the world' — reincarnated again and again in Herr Baby, Jasper, Peterkin and their brethren.[3]

Edmund Wilson in The Wound and The Bow traced Dickens's creative impulse to the traumatic experiences of his youth.[4] I do not mean to suggest that Mrs Molesworth's childish loneliness (for which we have no direct evidence) gave rise to the impulse behind all her fantasy novels of deprived children and their means of compensation.[5] But it is interesting to note that though many other of Mrs Molesworth's stories seem to have had their roots in some personal experience, it is only The Cuckoo Clock, the first major working out of the theme of the deprived child, that achieved immortality, along with the The Carved

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1. 'Story-Writing', op.cit., p. 160. 'The Nodding Mandarins' is not, as it might seem, a separate story.

2. Woolf, op.cit., p. 675.

3. Avery, Nineteenth Century Children, op.cit., p. 162.

4. Wilson, Edmund, The Wound and the Bow: Seven Studies in Literature (1941), Methuen, London, 1961, p. 5 and pp. 1-93, passim.

5. Roger Lancelyn Green asserts, without citing his sources, that though Mrs Molesworth 'had two brothers near her own age, they were either away at school, or very much concerned with their own affairs, and Louisa was an only child, amusing herself and inventing strange fairylands of her own....' ('Mrs Molesworth', op.cit., p. 104).

Lions, which also deals with the deprived child. The novels about 'the little friend of all the world' are dead. In other words, it is not just any autobiographical material which makes a lasting work of art, it is some autobiographical experience which has left a lasting impression on the author. That this was the case with The Cuckoo Clock is fairly certain, since it may be said that all her fantasy novels seem to be Mrs Molesworth's repeated attempts to exorcise some memory of childish hurt and loneliness.

f. Social Attitudes

The Cuckoo Clock, then, presents a model child, moving towards perfect obedience, restraint of temper, and dutifulness in working hard at lessons; while childhood is a process of gradual growing-up, putting away childish things (lapses of virtue, imaginative phantasising) and acquiring a maturer attitude towards life (realisation that being 'good' and individual effort are the ways to spiritual progress). The primary virtue of submission may be expressed as 'knowing one's place'. The model child not only knows its place vis-à-vis its elders and betters, it also knows its place in society. This is implicit throughout the novel, but the matter of class is made explicit towards the end, where it centres on the propriety of the relationship between Griselda and Phil. Miss Grizzel, as sensible, responsible, loving guardian, sees two possible objections to Griselda's association with Phil: his sex and his (presumed) class. The first objection is quickly resolved: Phil is a little boy. This is a world which assumes that girls are different from boys: Griselda's troop of merry brothers do not come home from overseas to be brought up correctly by two maiden ladies. It also assumes that the young female needs protection from the predatory male, for fear of contamination of some kind. This contamination

is overtly related to conduct: Miss Grizzel fears that one afternoon's 'companionship with rudeness' may have contaminated Griselda (p. 151), but it is clear that the fear of sexual contamination operates as well. There are no men in Griselda's world save the old tutor and the little boy who is almost a baby (p. 164). Dorcas is aghast when Griselda tells her that she played with a boy and relieved when she hears that Phil is young enough to need a nurse (p. 148), and so is Miss Grizzel (p. 153). Since, however, the protected girl is safe with a little boy, Griselda may play with Phil: the model girl may play with boys younger than her, and the model boy may play with girls older than he is.

Miss Grizzel equates maleness with rudeness and low social status: she juxtaposes the adjectives 'rude', 'common' and 'impertinent' when talking about boys (p. 152). The novel deals with middle or upper-class children, and is directed at the middle or upper class. The model child is socially 'superior', and does not mix with common children who are by definition rude. With echoes of Pip and Estella, and the 'boy/young lady' theme, Griselda naturally '"wouldn't want to play with a naughty rude boy"' (p. 148). Griselda does not make the equation between maleness, rudeness and commonness, but she does equate rudeness with commonness. And it is quickly proved that Phil, being of Griselda's own social status, is acceptable: since he is not common, he is not rude either, all the more so because he is little. And the model child does what her world does: she quickly indexes anybody she meets by checking out the outward signs of material prosperity. She meets a ragged and untidy Phil, but plays with him only after hearing that he has a nurse, for 'she had not felt at all sure what <u>sort</u> of little boy he was, or rather what sort of people he belonged to' (p. 138). Dorcas is relieved to hear the same thing (p. 148), and tells Miss Grizzel that Phil is 'quite a little gentleman' which relieves her greatly (p. 153). The point is made that the model

child automatically is friendly with children of its own class.

Through the book the outward signs of prosperity are stressed: Griselda's aunts' house is not as grand as the house of Lady Lavander, Griselda's godmother (p. 22); the narrator emphasises that though Sybilla's grandfather's coat is threadbare 'yet he did not look poor' (p. 81); Phil's nurse emphasises that Master Phil only looks like Master Phil in his blue velvet (p. 139). Miss Grizzel learns from Dorcas that Phil may be the little boy who is staying with his nurse at a farm owned by Lady Lavander. So she goes to check up on him:

> Lady Lavander knew all about him; his father and mother were friends of hers, for whom she had a great regard, and for some time she had been intending to ask the little boy to spend the day at Merrybrow Hall, to be introduced to her god-daughter, Griselda. So, of course, as Lady Lavander knew all about him, there could be no objection to his playing in Miss Grizzel's garden!
>
> (p. 186)

By showing Griselda's faults Mrs Molesworth had reinforced rather than undercut the presentation of the model child. In the same way, the irony implied in the italicised 'of course' pokes fun at the submission of Griselda's aunts to an authority higher than themselves, only to uphold that same value. Lady Lavander's social authority is reinforced by her moral authority: she is older than Griselda's aunts (p. 23). Hence when Griselda's aunts have the greatest respect for her, and when she is asked to be Griselda's godmother (p. 23), and when they hasten to see her at her bidding (p. 76), they are practising the primary virtue: submission to authority, in this case both moral and social.

As the great-aunts submit to Lady Lavander, Griselda submits to them, and the servants submit to their betters. Phil's nurse calls him Master Phil, Dorcas calls Griselda 'missie'. Griselda can talk 'indignantly' (p. 42), 'saucily' and 'sharply' (p. 147) to her in a way that she cannot to her great-aunts, with no reprimand implied.

Phil can talk in a 'lordly' way to his nurse: '"(Griselda) isn't a little girl, she's a young lady"' he says (p. 192). His is a naïve discrimination which is not solely based upon his conceptions of age. The relative positions of servant and upper-class child are not solely that of inferior and superior, not solely that of submission and authority. Dorcas is submissive: she waits upon Griselda,

> and sometimes when Griselda was in a particularly good humour she would beg Dorcas to sit down and have a cup of tea with her — a liberty the old servant was far too dignified and respectful to have thought of taking unless specially requested to do so.
>
> (p. 146)

But she is superior to her in age: she has something of moral authority. And in her thinking, as befits an uneducated countrywoman, Dorcas is equal to Griselda: she believes in fairies too, in a way that Miss Grizzel does not. Thus Dorcas, at once equal, inferior and superior to her little mistress, can act as a bridge between her and the adult world. Griselda can talk freely with her (pp. 45, 75, 127) and she can act as a 'skilful ambassadress' for Griselda with Miss Grizzel (pp. 152-155, 185). Dorcas's attitude to her position is implicitly praised by the narrator, and explicitly by Miss Grizzel (p. 154). She is satisfied in her position, for she has been in the service of the family for many years. Thus, the model child lives in a model world, where everybody knows their own position and degree and nobody presumes.

In a persuasive essay on The Princess and the Goblin, The Time Machine, and The Wind in the Willows, Jules Zanger argues that the flowering of fantasy novels in the later nineteenth century, a flowering that gradually moved away from 'transparent allegorising and overt moralising', 'appeared to offer to the imaginative reader alternatives to the solid Victorian pieties'.[1] Nevertheless, the fantasies, he says,

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1. Zanger, Jules, 'Goblins, Morlocks and weasels: classic fantasy and the Industrial Revolution', Children's Literature in Education, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1977, p. 154.

reveal

> the private nightmares of an England beset from without and within by the forces of social breakdown. These nightmares were expressed in fictions whose surfaces seemed innocent and distant from the social and political upheavals threatening what many Englishmen considered England's Golden Age.[1]

These fantasies are essentially conservative, past-oriented, revealing a predisposition towards a pre-urban, pre-industrial, pastoral England. Mr Zanger then gives a summary account of the forces that were threatening social stability such as the industrial riots and unemployment. He says that

> The fantasy literature that emerged from this time of unrest, of apprehension and of guilt, was a literature that ... reflected the fears and prejudices of the essentially middle-class audience — literate and leisured — for which it was written.[2]

He sees Victorian fantasy for children and its successors as works in which

> the sympathies of the reader are enlisted absolutely on the side of a traditional, pastoral world whose establishment is aristocratic, benign, and supernaturally supported.[3]

The works dealt with by Zanger present the forces of evil as seeking to subvert this order. Mr Zanger's analysis seems to apply to The Cuckoo Clock as well. The virtue of submission is one that can be enlisted to maintain the status quo. The world of the novel is a pastoral world: though the house is said to be in a town on the first page of the novel, the house is 'not like a town house' (p. 1), and the story is set in this house, a garden, a farm and a wood. Griselda's aunts keep cows and hens (p. 28). This is a world oriented towards the past. In 1877, when Mrs Molesworth wrote The Cuckoo Clock, minuets,

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1. Ibid., p. 154.

2. Ibid., p. 161.

3. Ibid.

mazurkas and chinoiserie had disappeared, and the child Griselda was not contemporaneous with the readers of the book. Mrs Molesworth was looking back to that undefined time (probably early nineteenth century) of mazurkas, minuets and chinoiserie in which Griselda was assumed to have lived. And even then, the world of the novel looks further back: to a time that had 'quite passed away' even when Griselda enters it. The establishment is aristocratic and benign — Lady Lavander knows all that goes on with her tenant farmers (p. 153) — and supernaturally supported (by the fairyfied cuckoo). It is also significant that this is a world where everything is old — people and objects — yet it is a stable, not a decaying world:

> Time indeed seemed to stand still in and all around the old house, as if it and the people who inhabited it had got so old that they could not get any older, and had outlived the possibility of change.
>
> (p. 2)

It is not as if the house is an oasis of age and changelessness in a world of youth and change: the age of the world extends beyond the house, to the servants and horses and Lady Lavander to the city itself; and even the rooks in the garden 'were always the same — ever and always the same' (p. 2).[1]

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1. A recent critic who thinks that children in English literature generally appear in thematic surroundings which discuss the Fall of Man, tries to push all fictional children into this mould, saying that

> traces of the strict doctrinaire origin of English children's literature can be found in the two most prolific children's writers of the period, Charlotte Yonge and Mrs Molesworth .... Mrs Molesworth's children often find themselves in dark old houses or antique shops, from which they escape into a world of fantasy; her books often confront the child with people and things of great age, as Dickens had, thereby suggesting, however obliquely, the contrast between the Old and New Laws

(Pattison, op.cit., p. 141).

I think that this is ridiculous, and that there is nothing in Mrs Molesworth's work to justify it. However her favourite adjective for children is 'old-fashioned' (i.e. precocious or quaint), and many of the novels are fictitious memoirs of bygone days.

Yet, unlike the works considered by Mr Zanger, no forces of evil or change threaten to subvert everything, and the young Griselda, entering it, is taught to support it by submitting to it and its values. Mr Zanger's authors had presented the destruction of evil forces. Mrs Molesworth does not admit the existence of these forces. As Bob Dixon says in his book Catching Them Young (1977), in dealing with children's literature it is necessary to make it explicit that the strongest form of indoctrination is that in which any possibility of conceiving alternatives is ruled out.[1]

Roger Lancelyn Green defends Mrs Molesworth from the charge of snobbery by pointing out various books in which the poor are presented sympathetically, sometimes as models for their rich superiors. These poor children (Gratian Conyfer in Four Winds Farm, Winifride in The Children of the Castle, Clementina in The Rectory Children, the family in Little Miss Peggy, and so on) are morally almost perfect, and contented with their lot. However, as George Orwell somewhere militantly remarked,

> the fact is that this business about the moral superiority of the poor is one of the deadliest forms of escapism the ruling class have evolved. You may be downtrodden and swindled, but in the eyes of God you are superior to your oppressors ....

and this should suffice. Gillian Avery has given examples of Mrs Molesworth's attitudes to class, such as her snobbery about accents, dislike of the 'underbred' and contempt for the lower middle classes.[2] I do not think that if these attitudes manifested themselves overtly in The Cuckoo Clock, as they do in Mrs Molesworth's later books, the novel would have remained in print. Mrs Molesworth's ideas about class, and indeed about what the child should aim at being, have lost currency. They are also too simplistic to take away from any

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1. Dixon, Bob, Catching Them Young, 2 vols, Pluto Press, London, 1977, passim.

2. Avery, Nineteenth Century Children, op.cit., pp. 167-169, 201-202.

appeal that the works in which they are expressed might have. It is fortunate that in The Cuckoo Clock the overt question of class may be easily ignored. Miss Grizzel is an easily upset old lady, and is flustered by a new occurrence in Griselda's playing with a boy. The matter may be treated as no more important than that, particularly as Griselda is given permission to continue playing with the boy she has met. In the same way, the tone that Griselda employs with Dorcas is less stridently authoritative than that of Leonora to her governess, or Fergus to Gratian, in later books, and is therefore not offensive to modern sensibilities. The great strength of The Cuckoo Clock lies in the fact that its snobbery is relatively covert, and may be ignored.

The fallible Griselda is a model child, which indicates what the ideal child should be. Griselda's world is a model world in the same way, indicating what the ideal world should be. Yet one may ignore the implications of both Griselda and her world. Griselda is a tribute to Mrs Molesworth's tact in making a good child interesting, sympathetic, and credible. I think the book too, is in its way, a model.

C. NARRATIVE ART

The Cuckoo Clock lives in the way it is written. This may seem obvious about any novel, but is not true of all works of fantasy. The traditional folk fairy tale, for example, lives in its retellings and translations. The adventures of Peter Pan are the prime example of a non-traditional work of fantasy that converted easily from drama to novel, and remains itself through all its retellings, including those by hands other than its author's. I cannot imagine this occurring with The Cuckoo Clock and the flavour of the original being maintained.

In contrast to some of Mrs Molesworth's other books, only an extract from The Cuckoo Clock was broadcast by the B.B.C. Copyright

difficulties made it impossible for me to compare the original and the 1956 radio version by Marion MacWilliam, but I do not imagine that they differ greatly, since the latter was not a dramatisation, but the dramatised reading of an excerpt.

a. Narrative Voice

A contemporary reports that Mrs Molesworth was 'in opposition to the modern theory that it is inartistic to write down to a child's level'.[1] The most immediate and striking evidence of her own willingness to 'write down' is her adoption of a particular sort of narrative voice.

Often, within a novel, the teller of the story need not necessarily be identified with the author himself. It may be said in such cases that an 'implicit author' has been created, whose attitudes and values may not be consonant with those of the author in real life. The implicit author may or may not be obtrusive in the work. When he is given a distinct character which may be easily separated from that of the real author, he may be called the narrator, or even 'narrative persona'. In cases such as The Cuckoo Clock, when external details about the narrative persona are withheld, it is preferable to talk about a disembodied 'narrative voice'.

The tone of voice of most of Mrs Molesworth's books for children is created by the employment of a common set of verbal mannerisms or characteristics. To begin with, these were the mannerisms of a particular narrative persona. In her first book for children, Tell Me A Story (1875), Mrs Molesworth presented an explicit narrative persona, an aunt, who announces that she will tell the short stories that follow to her nieces and nephews. She has a daughter called Sybil. In her second book, the full-length novel Carrots (1876), there is no explicit

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1. 'F.H.L.', op.cit., p. 1.

narrative persona, till Carrots and his sister go to visit their aunt, who tells them a story which is interpolated into the narrative. This aunt also has a daughter called Sybil.

Marghanita Laski assumes that this 'Auntie' is Mrs Molesworth, the author herself.[1] It is perhaps more accurate to say that 'Auntie', explicitly a narrative persona, has the tone and mannerisms of Mrs Molesworth's disembodied narrative voice in her subsequent children's books.

By her third book for children, The Cuckoo Clock, 'Auntie' has dissolved, as it were, into the narrative itself, leaving only the voice of an 'I', with no name, no particular sex and no details vouchsafed about it. Since the tone of this voice is created by the employment of mannerisms similar to that of 'Auntie', it is best described as an 'auntly narrative voice'.

Never again did Mrs Molesworth attach the auntly narrative voice to a specific narrative persona within a book, though often, interpolated stories are told by aunts or auntly figures (fairy godmothers or ordinary godmothers), as in Grandmother Dear (1878), The Tapestry Room (1879), Hoodie (1882), An Enchanted Garden (1892), This and That (1899) and The February Boys (1909). However, Mrs Molesworth did occasionally create a number of other narrative personae, at varying degrees of distance, both of time and of involvement, from the events they recount. These range from an old nurse (Nurse Heatherdale's Story, 1891) through a boy protagonist (The Girls and I, 1892) to a young girl retelling the events of a few years before (My New Home, 1894) or an old lady recalling her childhood (The Carved Lions, 1895).

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1. Laski, op.cit., p. 63. 'Sybil' is probably drawn from Mrs Molesworth's niece, Agnes Venetia Goring (later Hohler), daughter of Agnes and Sir Charles Goring.

The tone and mannerisms of what I have called the auntly narrative voice imply a basic attitude towards the audience of the narrative: the implication that the voice — 'I' — stands in direct relation to the audience — 'you' — as an adult stands to children; in particular, a certain sort of responsible adult, sympathetic, intimate, relaxed, and wise. As such, it is clear that the auntly narrative voice is not peculiar to Mrs Molesworth alone, and there are many variations upon the general model.

The best example of a corresponding narrative voice in an adult novel is perhaps that of Mrs Gaskell in the beginning of Ruth, though one hesitates to call it 'auntly'. Among Victorian writers for children, the most striking instance of an auntly narrative voice is perhaps Christina Rossetti's Speaking Likenesses (1874), which is cast in the form of a long dramatic monologue, from which it can be gathered that the voice is 'attached to' an aunt. The nature, number and responses of her listeners, as well as her own character and relationship with them, can be deduced.

In the majority of cases, unlike that of Speaking Likenesses, the sex of the narrative voice cannot be inferred from anything in the work itself. According to our knowledge of who wrote the book, then, we may call this sympathetic, intimate, relaxed narrative voice either auntly or 'avuncular', which might be more appropriate in the cases of the narrative voices of such male authors as Charles Kingsley in The Water Babies (1863) or Lewis Carroll in Alice (1865). The tone, mannerisms, and attitude of this kind of voice, whether auntly or avuncular, are remarkably similar from author to author.

There are other sorts of variations on the model: the auntly narrative voice may address itself to a group, as, for instance, Thackeray's narrative voice does in The Rose and the Ring (1855) when it talks to its 'dear friends' or to 'every boy or girl' before it.

Or, it may address itself to an individual, sometimes even of a particular sex, as Kingsley's narrative voice does in addressing its 'my little man'.

The auntly narrative voice may make explicit its awareness that it is using the medium of written communication, that it is directed to readers in the plural or singular. Mrs Gatty, for instance, on the first page of her The Fairy Godmothers (1851), establishes that her audience is 'my dear little readers'. In his 'An Easter Greeting', Lewis Carroll begins, 'Dear Child, Please to fancy, if you can, that you are reading a real letter ....' Alternatively, this awareness is covert only.

Sometimes, an author gives the reader a jolt, as it were, by having the auntly narrative voice suddenly shift its basic attitude of an adult in relation to children. This happens, for example, in one portion of The Fairy Godmothers, where the narrative voice suddenly addresses a comment to the scornful young lady who is reading the story aloud, not a page after it has been talking to its 'dear little readers'. It happens in The Rose and the Ring, when Thackeray's narrative voice tells its boys and girls to fancy what they would like to eat, and adds a footnote, presumably addressed to an adult, to the effect that at this point in the narrative, the children might play a game along the lines indicated. These jolts occur, of course, when the author is communicating to two audiences simultaneously.[1]

Lastly, there is room for variation, not only in the degree of particularity which the narrative voice gives those to whom it addresses itself, but the ways in which this degree is conveyed. Most often, the implications of the various occasional vocatives — 'children', 'child', 'reader', 'readers', 'my boy', 'boys', 'my girl', 'girls' — are all that one is vouchsafed. But there are other ways.

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1. See pp. 6-7, 81 of this thesis.

One striking variation is employed in George MacDonald's The Princess and the Goblin (1872), where the narrative proper is framed at both ends by a portion that is rarely printed in modern editions: an italicised dialogue in inverted commas, with no speakers identified outside them, from which it can be inferred that one speaker is probably a little girl speaking on behalf of a group, which is listening to 'Mr Author' read or tell the story he has invented.

The auntly narrative voice cuts across considerations of genre — it is used in fantasy novels, fantasy short stories, Kunstmärchen, and non-fantasy works alike. One of the variations on the model of this narrative voice is exemplified in The Cuckoo Clock. I will first discuss the audience to which the narrative voice addresses itself, what it is, and how it is implied, and then the other mannerisms of the narrative voice itself.

G.W. Turner asserts that 'Such special forms of writing as technical books or children's literature remind us that an author may choose an audience. He may also create one.'[1] In The Cuckoo Clock, Mrs Molesworth's auntly narrative voice directly addresses its audience as 'children' (pp. 45, 92, 110). The nature of the implicit audience is thus established: it is a group; it is undifferentiated as to gender; it stands in relation to someone older and wiser than itself. The word 'child' indicates both age-group and the attitude of the user. Only an adult would address children as 'children', for that is not a term used by a child towards its peers.

Since the book is addressed to a group of children, it is apparent that the condition of the implicit audience does not mirror that of the child protagonist, who is not part of a group of children, has few books to read (p. 77), and no-one to tell her stories. Perhaps

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1. Turner, G.W., Stylistics, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973, p. 173.

this difference is created in order to indicate to the children who read the book (or had it read to them) that they should be grateful for the advantages that they enjoyed in contrast to Griselda. In other words, the 'there but for the grace of God go you' attitude which is obvious in the stories of the street arabs, has been refined so that it is almost imperceptible in The Cuckoo Clock. Also, of course, the single isolated figure of Griselda has inherent in it all virtue, and if these virtues had been distributed among a group of protagonists of equal importance, the impact of the figure of the model child would probably have been lessened.

All auntly narrative voices are basically simulations of speaking voices, employing the colloquial mannerisms and locutions of conversation or oral narration, not those proper to formal written language. Here, as with most of Mrs Molesworth's writing for children, the auntly narrative voice never uses the vocative 'readers' and never alludes directly to writing, while using words such as 'speak', 'say' and 'words'. So it may be assumed that the auntly narrative voice is directed not at an implicit reader, but at a group of implicit hearers, whose responses it seeks to control.

At this point it would be as well to remark again that just as 'Auntie' and the auntly narrative voice are not the 'real' Mrs Molesworth, the group of implicit child listeners in The Cuckoo Clock is not necessarily to be identified with the actual audience of the book. These may originally have been children, but as one contemporary remarked, Mrs Molesworth's books 'have just as great a charm to older readers as to those on whose behalf they were written'[1] — a remark which holds equally today. Again, since silent reading is

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1. Bainton, op.cit., p. 93.

essentially a solitary activity, the actual child or adult reader would not fit the model of 'children'. Finally, the book may have been read to a group of children or a child by an adult. As the auntly narrative voice of Mrs Molesworth's An Enchanted Garden remarks, 'I have noticed that children rather enjoy a book story retold by voice.'[1] Hence, the implicit hearers of The Cuckoo Clock may have had as a corresponding actual audience an adult reader, a child reader, a child being read to, or a group of children being read to.

The auntly narrative voice of The Cuckoo Clock, the speaking voice, may well stem from Mrs Molesworth's own real-life experience of story-telling. She told stories to her siblings as a child;[2] when she became a writer she tried out her stories on her children by concealing the manuscripts in a book and reading them aloud;[3] she advised the aspiring writer for children to read out her stories to real children;[4] or to read aloud to the family or friends.[5] Many women have told stories who have not become popular writers for children. What is noteworthy is the art by which Mrs Molesworth could transmute the speaking voice of real life into the illusion of a speaking voice imprisoned in print.

In The Cuckoo Clock, the auntly narrative voice establishes an intimate or familiar relationship with its implicit child hearers, by using colloquial mannerisms and locutions. Some of these are those of 'childish' conversation or those which reflect a 'childish' viewpoint.

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1. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, An Enchanted Garden, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1892, p. 4.

2. 'How I Write ...', op.cit., pp. 16-17; 'Story Writing', op.cit., p. 160.

3. Woolf, op.cit., p. 675.

4. 'On the Art ...', op.cit., p. 344; 'Story-Reading ...', op.cit., p. 775.

5. Bainton, op.cit., p. 94.

The narrative voice tends to use made-up words: occasionally a noun, like 'old-fashionedness' (p. 11) but mainly adjectives and adverbs: 'cuckoo-y' (p. 35), 'chilblainy' (p. 52), 'fruzzley' (p. 62), 'mandariny-looking' (p. 65), 'lazy-easy' (p. 95), 'mixty-maxty' (p. 112), 'charminger' (p. 150), 'rushy' (pp. 162, 164). The narrative voice uses also certain 'nursery' adjectives: a lamp can be described as 'dear' (p. 52). With the emphasis on food in the novel, it is not surprising that a palace, a garden, and a flight can all be described as 'delicious' (pp. 12, 109, 162). In using childish words, the narrative voice is not only talking to its implicit hearers in the manner of the implicit hearers themselves, it is also taking up and mirroring the manner of speech of the protagonist of its story. Griselda too uses made-up words: '"I hate must-ing to do anything"' she says (p. 97). These special words, used by the narrative voice, are indicative of the way in which a certain kind of adult talks to a child. 'Dear' and 'delicious' used in these contexts are not found in responsible adult speech. It should also be said that these special words have nothing in common with the made-up 'nonsense' words of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear, which they may superficially resemble. In using them the narrative voice is, as it were, indicating its sympathy with both the implicit hearers and the child protagonist, thereby inviting the former to sympathise with the latter.

In her early essay on Mrs Ewing, Mrs Molesworth remarked about the style of children's books that they

> should be written in such a style and in such language that the full attention and interest of the young readers should be at once enlisted and maintained to the end without any demand for mental straining or undue intellectual effort.[1]

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1. 'Juliana Horatia Ewing', op.cit., p. 505.

In all the other essays in which Mrs Molesworth discussed the style and vocabulary of children's books, she was to stress another point entirely: that the author should not refrain from using long words, which would be explained by the context.[1] In The Cuckoo Clock she did not use many long words. When she does, 'gingerly' is put in inverted commas (p. 120), and the narrative voice tells its hearers: '"flabbergasted", if you know what that means' (p. 150). In this novel, it is not a matter of what 'hard' words are included, but a matter of the 'easy' and childish nonce-words that are employed by the narrative voice.

In the same way as the narrative voice uses the kind of childish words that Griselda uses, it imitates the childish intensity and zest that are evident in Griselda's own words.

Griselda tends to talk with great emphasis, which is indicated by the use of italics. For instance: '"I'd far rather have the fairy carpet"' (p. 41) or '"What a lovely cloak!"' (p. 52). The narrative voice too, tends to emphasise words in the same way. For instance, Griselda's shoes are beautiful 'only they were rather a stumpy shape' (p. 66) or Sybilla's grandfather 'did not look poor' (p. 81) or Griselda and Phil were 'very hot and very tired and rather dirty' (p. 189). What with Griselda's emphases and those of the narrative voice, almost every page of the book has at least one italicised word. These italics are a means of reproducing the cadences of conversation, as well as of creating intimacy with the implicit hearer and forming a bond between narrative voice, protagonist and implicit hearer.

Griselda's childish intensity and zest and emphatic manner are further mirrored in the tendency to hyperbole on the part of the

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1. Bainton, op.cit., pp. 93-94; 'On the Art ...', op.cit., p. 343; 'Story-Writing', op.cit., p. 164; Woolf, op.cit., pp. 675-676.

narrative voice. It makes a liberal use of superlatives. Griselda's dress is 'the most magnificent dress you ever saw' (p. 65), her shoes are 'the dearest, sweetest little pair' (p. 66), Sybilla is the 'dearest little girl you ever saw, and so funnily dressed!' (p. 81), feeling slightly ill is 'very extremely' nasty (p. 193), the butterfly garden is 'the loveliest, loveliest garden' (p. 109), Griselda's head is 'crammed full, perfectly full, of fairy lore' (p. 133).

The narrative voice grows almost incoherent in its intensity and uses the rhetorical figure of occupatio, protesting that words are insufficient for description. It protests that it cannot describe the food in Mandarin Land, Sybilla's grandfather's workshop, the butterfly garden, the butterfly dress, Griselda's enjoyment of the spring, Griselda's flight on the cuckoo's back. When Griselda sees the sea on the moon, the voice remarks that it

> is something that I can only give you a faint idea of, children ... if I could [describe it adequately] my words would be as good as pictures, which I know they are not.
>
> (p. 173)

The use of the speaking voice thus creates the intimacy of conversation, with the specific childish words, locutions and intensity establishing an intimacy with the implicit group of child hearers. Their sympathy with the child protagonist is invited when the narrative voice reflects the manner of the child protagonist. However, this is not the voice of one child to another, but that of the adult indicating its sympathy for children by addressing them in their own manner. The adult has come down to the level of the child as part of the compact between teller and listener.

In the same way, the narrative voice creates intimacy with the implicit hearers by affecting naïveté. For example, when describing Griselda's sums the narrative voice asserts 'I can't explain it — it is far beyond my poor powers' (p. 19). Or again, a direct address to

to the reader like this:

> Children, I feel quite in a hobble — I cannot get my mind straight about it — please think it over and give me your opinion
>
> (pp. 92-93)

is part of a shared jest. The narrative voice does not want to dupe the implicit hearers that it is really naïve; the self-deprecation is obviously ironic, because exaggerated. The narrative voice is asking the hearers to be intimate with it, in its indication that it is willing to make fun of itself.

The narrative voice also indicates to its hearers that story-telling is a relaxed activity, not serious, and the story does not demand a rigorously attentive response. The narrative voice does this by using the patterns of conversation: by digressing (thus disrupting the telling of an ordered sequence of events); by the use of the dislocated sentence; and by commenting on the story at a distance.

The narrative voice feels no compunction in rambling on, when struck by something in the story. For example, after Miss Grizzel hopes that Griselda's cold will get better,

> Griselda's cold was much better by "to-morrow morning". In fact, I might almost say it was quite well.
>
> But Griselda herself did not feel quite well, and saying this reminds me that it is hardly sense to speak of a cold being better or well — for a cold's being "well" means that it is not there at all, out of existence, in short, and if a thing is out of existence how can we say anything about it? Children ... give me your opinion. In the meantime, I will go on about Griselda.[1]
>
> (pp. 92-93)

Another good example occurs when the narrative voice describes the arrival of spring (p. 129). Sometimes the digressions, which are

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1. This obviously derives from the portion of Alice which runs: 'And she tried to fancy what the flame of a candle looks like after the candle is blown out, for she could not remember ever having seen such a thing', which is glossed by one annotator, referring to Goethe, Freud and Descartes, as 'a puzzle about existence' (Peter Heath, The Philosopher's Alice, Academy Editions, London, 1974, p. 19).

invariably to humorous effect, are brought in by an obvious association of ideas. When describing the sea on the moon, the narrative voice remarks:

> King Canute might have sat "from then till now" by this still, lifeless ocean without the chance of reading his silly attendants a lesson — if indeed, there were such silly people, which I very much doubt.
>
> (p. 174)

In one instance, the digression occurs in the middle of the sentence, in the guise of a simile:

> "If it was summer now, or spring," [Griselda] repeated to herself, just as if she had not been asleep at all — like the man who fell into a trance for a hundred years just as he was saying "it is bitt—" and when he woke up again he finished the sentence as if nothing had happened — "erly cold." "If only it was spring," thought Griselda.
>
> (p. 6)

These digressions are in keeping with the simulation of oral narrative, as also with the affected naïveté of the narrative voice, but they serve primarily as an indication that the narrative voice is relaxed about the story, and so should be the implicit hearers.

In the same way, some of the important sentences are dislocated. Griselda's trials at the hands of her tutor are described thus:

> It was dreadful, really.
> He came twice a week, and the days he didn't come were as bad as those he did, for he left her a whole row I was going to say, but you couldn't call Mr Kneebreeches' addition sums "rows", they were far too fat and wide across to be so spoken of! — whole slatefuls of these terrible mountains of figures to climb wearily to the top of.
>
> (pp. 18-19)

In addition to the colloquial tone, the adoption of the point of view of Griselda with regard to the sums, the childish zest, the humour and the affected naïveté, the breathlessness of the sentence with the subordinate clauses and the use of parenthesis should be noticed.

Marghanita Laski quotes the long passage in which the butterflies dress Griselda, which she calls 'probably the most dearly remembered

passage in any children's book',[1] and says

> Read this passage as a critical adult and a multitude of faults glare out at you. The syntax is shaky, the sentence structure clumsy — both very usual faults in Mrs Molesworth's children's books. The choice of words is limited and unimaginative...[2]

She then defends it by saying that 'Her whole passage was written for a child and is properly susceptible only to children's criticism.'[3]

It is noteworthy that Mrs Laski says that Mrs Molesworth's stylistic 'faults' are usual in her children's books, for it is a fact that the sentences of her 'stories for girls' move at a conventional, sedate pace with none of the 'childish' mannerisms I mentioned. Hence, Mrs Molesworth could write 'correctly' if she so chose. What Mrs Laski calls 'faults', I call narrative art. Without resorting to the ambiguities of 'children's criticism', it can be said that the clumsy syntax is part of Mrs Molesworth's method to reproduce the effect of the speaking voice of the sympathetic adult, in order to create intimacy with the implicit hearers.

What strikes one on reading passages such as the one above is the resemblance here to Jane Austen's Miss Bates in Emma or Dickens's Mrs Lirriper in Mrs Lirriper's Lodgings. The ramblings of these characters are said to be forerunners of the stream-of-consciousness works of the new century. Perhaps it might be said that the various ramblings of the auntly narrative voices were in their minor way also forerunners of the new kind of novel.

The auntly narrative voice sometimes appears to be somewhat distanced; since it occasionally stands apart from the story, comments on it in various ways.

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1. Laski, op.cit., p. 66.

2. Ibid., p. 67.

3. Ibid. See pp. 2-3 of this thesis.

The narrative voice indicates that the story it tells is a story it has heard, by commenting on the reactions of the rooks to Griselda's arrival:

> I never heard if they slept well that night; after such unusual excitement it was hardly to be expected they would.
>
> (p. 5)

It conjectures about the reasons for various things in the story, using the verbs 'suppose' and 'think' (pp. 2, 45, 130). It admits its ignorance as to the reasons for elements in the story indispensable to the plot. For example, to ensure that the implicit hearers understand that Griselda's hearing the live cuckoo in the garden in spring is unusual, it says

> For some reason that I do not know enough about the habits of "flesh-and-blood" cuckoos to explain, that bird was not known in the neighbourhood ....
>
> (p. 133)

On the other hand, the narrative voice tends to catch itself up, hastily explaining in retrospect:

> "What a lovely cloak!" said Griselda, wrapping it round her ... as she watched the little lamp in the roof — I think I was forgetting to tell you that the cuckoo's boudoir was lighted by a dear little lamp set into the red velvet roof like a pearl on a ring — playing softly on the brilliant colours of the feather mantle.
>
> (pp. 52-53)

Or, when it has begun by talking about spring time and Griselda's enjoyment:

> The bowling green was certainly very delightful ... but lovely as the roses were (I am speaking just now, of course, of later on in the summer, when they were all in bloom), Griselda could not enjoy them ....
>
> (p. 130)

The narrative voice can even comment on itself:

> The cuckoo smiled, I was going to say, but that would be a figure of speech only, would it not?
>
> (p. 110)

These various kinds of comment are indications that the story of Griselda is invention, that the narrative voice, though it avers it has heard the story, is making it up as it goes along, hence the obvious covering its tracks that it indulges in. These signs that the story-telling is a non-serious, relaxed occupation, which the voice itself has not prepared rigorously for, are an invitation to the implicit hearers to respond in a correspondingly relaxed manner.

Together with the creation of intimacy with the narrative voice and the establishment of a relaxed response to the story itself, the narrative voice extends an invitation to the implicit hearers to participate in the story. To a certain extent, this is done by directly addressing the implicit hearers as 'you'. The narrative voice thus assumes a common ground between itself and the implicit hearers. More than that, however, when it uses phrases like 'you will see' (p. 133), 'you must have seen' (p. 93), 'the dearest ... you ever saw' (p. 81), 'I can assure you' (p. 189), the narrative voice, looking beyond the story to the reader, is creating the illusion that there is a direct interplay between narrative voice and hearer, just as there is in an oral story-telling situation.

This interplay is furthered by the use of rhetorical questions. When Griselda feels like crying out before her aunts and Lady Lavander, the narrator asks, 'What would the three old ladies have thought if she had called it out?' (p. 23). Here the narrative voice assumes that the implicit hearers would know what the reactions of the ladies would have been, for it assumes that its implicit hearers share its own experiences and attitudes. More important, when the narrative voice asks questions like 'What did she see?' (p. 109), 'And how do you think they dressed her?' (p. 118), 'Had ever a little girl such a flight before?' (p. 167), 'Where was she?' (p. 173), it is indicating

its own intense interest in what is going on, and assuming the same interest on the part of the implicit hearers, thus directing their responses, while asking for their participation in the story.

At certain points the narrative voice even assumes that the implicit hearers are its collaborators in the making of the story. For example, in passages like these:

> A gentleman lifted [Griselda] out of the carriage and disappeared with her into the house .... That was all that the rooks saw .... Shall we go inside to see more?
> (p. 3)

(This might be compared to George Eliot's narrative voice at the beginning of Adam Bede.)

> And Mr — I can't remember the little old gentleman's name. Suppose we call him Mr Kneebreeches — Mr Kneebreeches ... conscientiously put her back to the very beginning.
> (p. 18)

The narrative voice occasionally uses irony to poke gentle fun at the characters in the story, and irony always depends on some shared understanding between two parties from which somebody is excluded. The irony may be directed against Griselda, as when her 'weighty cares' are nothing more than brushing her hair (p. 8), or when she talks 'sagely' to Phil (p. 144). Two passages illustrate this irony:

> [Miss Grizzel said] "Respect to your elders, my dear, always remember that. The mandarins are many years older than you — older than I myself, in fact."
>
> Griselda wondered, if this were so, how it was that Miss Grizzel took such liberties with them herself, but she said nothing.
> (p. 12)

> [The cuckoo says] "Don't you know that if all the world and everything in it, counting yourself of course, was all made little enough to go into a walnut, you'd never find out the difference?"
>
> "Wouldn't I?" said Griselda, feeling rather muddled; "but, not counting myself, cuckoo, I would then, wouldn't I?"
>
> "Nonsense," said the cuckoo hastily; "you've a great deal to learn, and one thing is, not to argue."
> (p. 49)

In both cases Griselda only half-perceives what is perfectly obvious to the narrative voice and to the implicit hearers: that adults are often not logically consistent. But because the narrative voice is an adult one, the irony is divested of any subversive intent: it is another instance of the bond between adult auntly narrative voice and group of implicit child hearers. In the same way, after Griselda's final declaration of her good intentions, Dorcas wonderingly hopes that '"the child's not going to be ill"' (p. 185). Here, the narrative voice is inviting the implicit hearer to laugh at the stereotype of the ideal, perfect pious child not long for this world, thereby indicating that Griselda, who knows nothing of this, does not fit that stereotype.

The creation of intimacy with the narrative voice, relaxation in the story-telling situation and participation in the story itself are, as might be expected, tools for Mrs Molesworth's didactic purpose. Here is the art which conceals art, the disorder hiding order. Since the narrative voice is so obtrusive, commenting about so many things, the didactic comments it makes pass muster with the others.

The narrative voice makes its point about bravery through one of its many rhetorical questions:

> [Griselda] was afraid of nothing. Or rather perhaps I should say she had never learnt that there was anything to be afraid of! And is there?
>
> (p. 31)

It condemns Griselda's ill-tempered and lazy self-pity with a similar ironical rhetorical question:

> Upstairs Griselda was hurry-scurrying into bed. There was a lovely fire in her room — fancy that! Was she not a poor neglected little creature?
>
> (p. 99)

Protected by the sympathy it projects, and the intimacy it has created, the narrative voice can even make flat generalisations which

are obviously didactic. For instance, when Griselda sulks after she is told that her lessons will resume with her tutor, the narrative voice combines description with comment:

> She was "so tired," she said; and she certainly looked so, for ill-humour and idleness are excellent "tirers," and will soon take the roses out of a child's cheeks, and the brightness out of her eyes.
>
> (p. 99)

Again, after describing Griselda's anxiety in asking permission to play with Phil, an anxiety that makes her take 'a sort of spiteful pleasure in injuring her own cause', the narrative voice comments, 'How foolish ill-temper makes us!' (p. 149). In both these cases the narrative voice has been able to shift from the particular to the general, making general points about conduct and human nature.

One passage with an explicit moral purpose deserves special attention:

> And Griselda became gradually more and more convinced that the only way as yet discovered of getting through hard tasks is to set to work and do them; also, that grumbling, as things are at present arranged in this world, does not always, nor may I say often, do good; furthermore, that an ill-tempered child is not, on the whole, likely to be as much loved as a good-tempered one; lastly, that if you wait long enough, winter will go and spring will come.
>
> (p. 129)

This is perhaps a less happy example than the previous one. There is a blurring of focus, a 'preached' rather than a 'displayed' moral. Yet there is art here too, for this is overtly a description of what Griselda learns, but covertly a statement of what the narrative voice considers the 'correct' attitudes for a child to have. The statement is one of those long, rambling, syntactically clumsy, dislocated ones that were earlier used to contribute to the impression of childish breathless zest; the italics are present. The use of meiosis in 'not always, nor ... often' appeals to the compact between narrative voice and implicit child hearers, in that it assumes that both understand that

the words mean 'never'. There is a movement from Griselda's understanding of the uselessness of grumbling to the narrator's obtrusive 'I may say' which is directed at the implicit hearers and away from Griselda. Whereas the narrative voice has shown and will show Griselda's awareness of the inevitability of hard work, and the use of patience, nowhere in the book is it demonstrated that 'an ill-tempered child is not ... likely to be as much loved as a good-tempered one'. Griselda does not really learn this: it is, rather, directly addressed to the implicit hearer by the narrative voice. By the last clause, it is no longer striking that Griselda does not learn that 'if she waited long enough, winter would go' but that 'if you wait long enough' — Griselda's personal education has been transformed into a set of universally valid moral generalisations that the narrative voice is addressing to the group of implicit child hearers. This passage is immediately followed by the light digression on winter and spring.

Hence, the manner in which the narrative voice addresses its implicit reader, a manner which indicates sympathy, establishes intimacy, relaxation and participation in the story, is a manner which works to a didactic end. Just as the fantasy adventures were the sugar-coating for the moral pill on the levels of plot and character, the auntly narrative voice is the sugar-coating for its own moral pills which are conveyed through comment rather than depiction.

There are two areas, however, in which Mrs Molesworth's use of the auntly narrative voice seems to me to be unwarranted. First, there is one image which is a glaring example of tastlessness. On Griselda's second interview with the cuckoo

> There came the usual murmuring sound, then the doors above the clock face opened — she heard them open, it was far too dark to see — as in his ordinary voice, clear and distinct (it was just two o'clock, so the cuckoo was killing two birds with one stone, telling the hour and greeting Griselda at once), the bird sang out, "Cuckoo, cuckoo."
>
> (p. 47)

Among the clauses of the dislocated sentence, the clause in brackets is extremely out of place.

Second, there is an unwarranted tear-jerking at certain points in the novel. There are indeed, points of legitimate pathos in the novel centred around Griselda's loneliness: such as when she stands in the dark room apologising to the unresponsive clock (p. 34), or when she weeps to Dorcas because she has been forbidden to meet Phil the next day and she thinks he will think that she has deserted him (p. 155). Pathos here is legitimate because it is inherent in the figure of the deprived, lonely child. The moments of pathos centering around Griselda are shown to the reader, that is, they are conveyed through dialogue and description, not comment. With the presentation of Phil, though, at those points when he is revealed not through dialogue, but through 'loaded' description, pathos tends to become unwarranted sentimentality. This effect is achieved by the use of certain emotive words and phrases. Phil is 'a very sturdy, very merry, very ragged little boy' (p. 135). When Griselda attempts to send him away, the narrative voice describes his reaction thus:

> His voice sounded almost as if he were going to cry, and his pretty, hot, flushed face puckered up. Griselda's heart smote her ....
>
> (p. 137)

and it is evident that the narrative voice intends the hearts of her implicit readers to be smitten too. Again, on the night when Griselda visits Phil with the cuckoo, the narrative voice waxes eloquent, using such emotive adjectival phrases as 'lovely sleeping child', 'shaggy curls', 'rosy mouth', 'little hand', 'little basket', 'like a baby almost' in a long description (pp. 163, 164). The narrative voice is appealing to the sentimentality about babies that lurks in the heart of the most hardened person. But these touches of sentimentality are

unrelated to Phil's lonely condition. They are there almost for their own sake.[1]

I mentioned that the auntly narrative voice was common to many Victorian writers for children, who use many of the devices and mannerisms mentioned above. This kind of narrative voice may be characterised as 'arch': in the case of Mrs Molesworth, this means 'playfully saucy', secure in the shared jest with its implicit hearers. But the word 'arch' can also mean 'having an exaggerated, often forced or artificial playfulness', and the auntly narrative voice, if not employed with discretion, can often be accused of this. I do not feel that the latter is the case with The Cuckoo Clock. A comparison with a book in which the same kind of narrative voice does become objectionable, 'arch' in the second sense, is illuminating. The best book for this purpose, though not Victorian, is Enid Blyton's The Enchanted Wood (1939), which I mentioned earlier as an example of an inferior fantasy novel in The Cuckoo Clock tradition.

The narrative voice in The Enchanted Wood uses many of the same devices which mark the narrative voice of The Cuckoo Clock. To begin with, there is the same use of 'nursery' adjectives. In the first six pages, for example, 'lovely' is used seven times, four times by the narrative voice and three times by the children. 'Dear' is also a favourite adjective. Three short passages will further demonstrate the resemblance.

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1. Gillian Avery has pointed out that Mrs Molesworth tended to be more indulgent with her boy characters than her girl characters. (Avery, Nineteenth Century Children, op.cit., p. 162.) Perhaps this is the reason that Phil is viewed through a rosy haze, whereas Griselda is not. Though the literary ancestor of Phil and his brethren is George MacDonald's Diamond, apparently his original in real life was Mrs Molesworth's son Lionel, a delicate little boy who was consequently a little spoilt.

> They were soon in The Enchanted Wood. But dear me, it was quite, quite different now! It was simply alive with people and animals!
>
> How sleepy the children were that day! And dear me, didn't they go to bed early that night! ....
>
> "No more wandering through the Enchanted Wood and up the Faraway Tree for me to-night," said Jo, as he got into bed. "I vote we don't go there for a long time. It's getting a bit too exciting."
>
> "Good-night!" they said. "What a lovely day it's been. We are lucky to live near the Enchanted Wood!"
>
> They were, weren't they? Perhaps they will have more adventures one day; but now we must say good-bye to them, and leave them fast asleep, dreaming of the Land of Birthdays, and all the lovely things that happened there![1]

The narrative voice of The Enchanted Wood is arch only in the second sense. It lacks the ability to share an ironical jest or laugh either at itself or its protagonist. There are no digressions or odd similes, no moral admonitions. What we are left with is no more than a collection of mannerisms. The three passages are marked by emphases, superlatives, intensity and zest, comment, forecast, rhetorical question, direct address, appeals to collaborate ('we'): the same mannerisms as in The Cuckoo Clock. The narrative voice of The Enchanted Wood goes even further than does that in The Cuckoo Clock, for in addition to the same dislocated syntax, it sprinkles its utterances with 'ooh!' as an exclamation of delight. But whereas the mannerisms of the narrative voice in The Cuckoo Clock all work to the deeper end of conveying Mrs Molesworth's vision of life, such as it was, the narrative voice in The Enchanted Wood conveys through the story it tells no vision of life at all.

Even such a master as Lewis Carroll had his auntly/avuncular narrative voice degenerate into self-parody in The Nursery Alice, which

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1. Blyton, Enid, The Enchanted Wood, George Newnes, London, 1939, pp. 45, 165, 192.

is peppered with the two mannerisms which are easiest to adopt: the nursery adjective and the rhetorical question. The worst excesses of this sort of narrative voice are cruelly parodied in a portion of a little-known essay by A.A. Milne: 'Children's Books', which is salutary reading.[1] But it does not require a comparison with The Nursery Alice or The Enchanted Wood or Milne's touchstone parody to make one admire Mrs Molesworth's art in her use of the auntly narrative voice. The fact is that in her hands it becomes a tool to convey her moral vision, and that it never becomes pedestrian or irritating: these are cause for admiration enough.

b. Dream Machinery

Having previously discussed Griselda's adventures as phantasy, I will now consider Mrs Molesworth's use of the dream as a narrative device, as machinery, so to speak.

It is never explicit that Griselda's adventures are indeed dreams, and indeed there are some elements in the novel which are deliberately discrepant with this interpretation of what happens. However, similar discrepancies in George MacDonald's Phantastes do not prevent Q.D. Leavis from referring to that work as what it obviously is, an account of a dream.[2] I shall follow suit in my account of The Cuckoo Clock, since it does contain the basic indication of Alice (and most Alice imitations, and Phantastes) that such is the case.

Alice's adventures begin on a hot afternoon, while she is lying down, feeling 'very sleepy and stupid'. When they are over, she realises that she has dreamt them. In the same way, all Griselda's

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1. Milne, A.A., By Way of Introduction, Methuen, London, 1929, pp. 127-132.

2. Leavis, Q.D., 'The Water Babies', Children's Literature in Education, Vol. 23, Winter 1976, p. 157.

adventures begin in the context of sleep. Her first interview with the cuckoo, and three of her journeys with him begin at night, after she has gone to bed and fallen asleep (pp. 33, 47, 100, 156). The one occasion the cuckoo is seen to come to her in the day is preceded by her curling up in her chair and wishing she could go to sleep (p. 77). These are sufficient indications that Griselda's adventures are dreams. Alice had two dreams in two books, Griselda has many in one.

Nevertheless, unlike Alice but like Phantastes, there is no final realisation by the protagonist that he or she has been dreaming. The omission of this final realisation is an occasional feature of Alice imitations — J.G. Austin's Moonfolk (1933 play version), Skeffington Lucas's The Fish Crown in Dispute, for instance — but what is interesting is the use to which Mrs Molesworth put it. The omission of the final realisation goes with the various 'objective' proofs that Griselda's adventures are not dreams.

It is noteworthy that these proofs are susceptible of an ordinary explanation as well, an explanation neither given nor denied in the text itself.

Griselda is convinced that the clock rights itself after she has apologised to the cuckoo, because of her nocturnal apology to him, particularly as Miss Grizzel indulges in mysteriousness and will not admit to having had the clock put right. Yet, faulty clocks do right themselves without supernatural explanation, as general experience indicates, or Miss Grizzel may have indeed called in a repairer.

There are ordinary explanations for the material proofs that Griselda brings back with her from the mandarins and the butterflies, the discovery of which convinces her when she wonders if her experiences are dreams. Dorcas thinks that the little china shoe comes from one of the figurines in the house, and that the scent from butterfly-land comes from the blue china bottle on Miss Grizzel's dressing table.

Griselda protests that they are not:

> "It just isn't one of the Chinese dolls' shoes, and if you don't believe me, you can go and look for yourself," said Griselda. "It's my very own shoe, and it was given me to my own self."
>
> (p. 75)

> "Stuff and nonsense ... it's my scent of my own, Dorcas. Aunt Grizzel never had any like it in her life."
>
> (p. 127)

The matter is dropped: if Dorcas had been depicted as actually checking and finding the shoe and scent-bottle intact, this would have settled the question. Again, if she had found them tampered with, this would indicate not Griselda's duplicity, but that she had been sleepwalking during her dreams, and picked them up.

In the same way, Griselda's aunts find it astounding that she has such a knowledge of family history. Yet most of what she saw of Sybilla may be seen as stemming from Dorcas's talk or her own experiences of the old house.

Griselda takes it for granted that the cuckoo she hears in the garden by day is her cuckoo, remarking ingenuously that she has hitherto never had any contact with him during the day. The narrative voice says that cuckoos did not come to that part of the country. So when the cuckoo not only cuckoos, but appears to have led a playmate to Griselda, a playmate who has also had mysterious experiences with a cuckoo and is following its call, this seems to be positive proof. The pair are led home on a subsequent occasion by a cuckoo's call. Again, however, this cuckoo never appears, and a coincidental stray cuckoo in a part of the country where cuckoos do not appear is not inconceivable.

The day after Griselda and the cuckoo deliver a nocturnal message to Phil, she asks him if he missed her the day before, but not whether he knew that she was unable to come (p. 186). The question of whether Phil actually did receive her message in his dreams, which

would settle the matter, is never taken up.

So, Mrs Molesworth's use of the dream machinery involves Griselda's fantasy adventures beginning in the context of sleep, and the 'objective' proofs that they are not dreams have an air of ambiguity about them.

To further blur the distinction between waking, sleeping and dreaming, Griselda's fantasy adventures include sleep within them. Before seeing the pictures, she goes to sleep after the cuckoo has appeared and talked to her (p. 79). On her visit to the moon, in between flights, she sleeps. Not only does she sleep within her dreams, she also dreams of Phil sleeping. When she visits him with the cuckoo, he answers her with his eyes shut, and '"He thinks he's dreaming, I suppose," she said to herself with a smile' (p. 164). She thinks she sees the cuckoo's use of dream as a tool to communicate, not allowing that he himself is part of a dream, from which she will wake.

And of course, all Griselda's adventures taper off into unconsciousness and culminate in waking. The cuckoo throws his cloak around her and she knows no more (p. 74), a voice sings a lullaby (p. 126), she closes her eyes (p. 126), or she counts to herself with her eyes closed (p. 82) as each of her adventures end. But it is left unclear whether her subsequent waking is from the sleep within the fantasy adventures, or from the sleep preceding them.

Later, in The Tapestry Room, An Enchanted Garden and The Magic Nuts, Mrs Molesworth used the fantasy adventures of her protagonists as a device to include an interpolated story told by a godmother figure, during the telling of which the hearers fall asleep to wake up to their normal waking lives. These portions of these books present striking, virtually identical tableaux of an old woman spinning, telling vivid stories to her child hearers grouped around her — tableaux reminiscent

of the image implied by the title of Perrault's Tales of Mother Goose, traditional frontispieces of which do indeed depict this image. The use of sleep within the fantasy adventures represents a variation on the device first used in The Cuckoo Clock.

Roger Lancelyn Green described Mrs Molesworth's fantasy novels as 'visionary tales',[1] echoing Charlotte Yonge who described Four Winds Farm as 'one of the best of Mrs Molesworth's dream-like tales'.[2] Four Winds Farm, in which the use of dream machinery is similar to that of The Cuckoo Clock, does not attempt to convey any of the incoherence and fluid quality of real dreams, nor does The Cuckoo Clock, so the phrases are misleading.

Carroll had successfully conveyed a sense of fluidity in Alice, where the events follow one on another with no perceptible links. Only occasionally, however, does an Alice imitation succeed in this. Jean Ingelow's Mopsa the Fairy (1869), a classic fantasy novel for children, just manages to be dream-like, reproducing the fragmented quality of a dream (though it is not an account of a dream, it resembles Alice imitations in some respects) without the book falling apart. George MacDonald's Phantastes, a work of fantasy for adults, achieves the same feat.

Most Alice imitations which attempt to convey fluidity fail more or less disastrously. Full-length examples are G.E. Farrow's The Wallypug of Why, or Clara Bradford's Ethel's Adventures in the Doll Country. The best example of an extremely bad Alice imitation which attempts and fails is Knatchbull-Hugessen's short 'Harry's Dream' (in Whispers from Fairyland, 1875), which is typical also of the

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1. Green, Tellers of Tales, op.cit., p. 113.

2. Yonge, op.cit., p. 76.

author's coarse humour and clumsy style. The dream-journey in Mrs Molesworth's own The Tapestry Room fails because its various parts follow each other in bewildering and boring succession, so it is just as well that she did not attempt to convey a sense of dreamlike fluidity in The Cuckoo Clock.

I think that Mrs Molesworth used the dream machinery, inherited from Alice, to signal effect. Edwin Honig, in his account of the use of the dream artifice, says that it is a 'threshold symbol', a way of 'introducing a world with unspecified dimensions of time and space'.[1] As with the opening formula of fables, it provides 'a sudden passage into the unknown'.[2] That is, since in real dreams physical laws are depicted as suspended, the use of the dream as machinery is a way of persuading the reader that the account of fantasy events and objects presented is acceptable, and does not strain artistic credulity.

Honig makes another telling comment, saying that the dream artifice 'conveys the serious tone of the make-believe, designating the transcendent import of the matter experienced by the dreamer'.[3] This is not always the case with children's literature, particularly with pedestrian Alice imitations, in which the use of dream machinery strikes one as little more than an excuse to present a rambling series of fantasy incidents and objects, with no underlying unity in the narrative. This kind of misuse of dream machinery, presumably, led Q.D. Leavis to remark that The Water Babies is good because it does not use 'that disastrous throwing the reins on the neck of the dream-horse which we find in Novalis and George MacDonald's Phantastes'.[4]

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1. Honig, Edwin, Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory, Faber, London, 1960, p. 70.

2. Ibid., p. 71.

3. Ibid., p. 78.

4. Leavis, op.cit., p. 157.

I think Mrs Leavis is mistaken in her choice of examples, but the import of the comment strikes me as more often than not justified in the case of children's literature.

But in the case of The Cuckoo Clock, I do think that Mrs Molesworth's use of dream machinery indicates that the make-believe is serious and the matter experienced by the dreamer is of transcendent import for the reader. In presenting Griselda, Mrs Molesworth is presenting the compensation sought for by the deprived child, and indirectly protesting at this deprivation. This is the reason that Phil and Sybilla's experiences with the cuckoo are also presumably dreams (even though Phil does not really have any connection with the clock as Sybilla did). Honig remarks that threshold symbols are often 'the thematic centre of a whole episode'.[1] There are other ways of presenting fantasy than through the dream artifice; the point is that Mrs Molesworth's use of it involves not just consummate artistry, but a thematic point. Here, the dream machinery is not just machinery, it is the highly appropriate means by which Mrs Molesworth conveys her concern with the dream-phantasising of the deprived child. Hence, just as the book is a fantasy novel about phantasy, the dream machinery is in a way about itself, about why certain children have certain sorts of dreams.

I mentioned that Tolkien thought that the use of the dream-frame disfigured a narrative.[2] It is interesting, though fruitless, to speculate about what he would have made of Mrs Molesworth's comparatively sophisticated use of the dream machinery in The Cuckoo Clock, which involves the dream-frame around the fantasy events and objects.

Lewis Carroll did not bring up the relationship between the sleeping and waking life, between reality and dream, in Alice. There, the dream

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1. Honig, op.cit., p. 72.

2. Tolkien, op.cit., p. 19.

machinery simply involves the use of a dream-frame. However, in Through the Looking-Glass Alice is vexed by the problem of: 'Which dreamed it'? Was the Red King dreaming of her or was she dreaming of him? In the terminal poem, Carroll asks, 'Life, what is it but a dream?' Perhaps the use of dream machinery ultimately tempts the user or the reader to ask this question.

I think perhaps that Mrs Molesworth manages to suggest in her use of dream machinery that maybe this distinction between sleeping and waking lives is not as important as it is generally held to be. Just as Griselda decides that it does not really matter if her vision of Sybilla was a dream (p. 87), Mrs Molesworth points in the same direction by having her narrative voice obscure the point at which wakefulness becomes sleep, by including sleep in dream and presenting dreamlike coincidences during the day in the narrative. The epigraph to Chapter 9, from William Brighty Rands's A Liliput Revel, is indicative of this suggested perspective:

> Helper. Well, but if it was all dream, it would be the same as if it was all real, would it not?
>
> Keeper. Yes, I see. I mean, Sir, I do not see.
>
> (p. 145)

Whether or not this is the case, it is certain that in Mrs Molesworth's hands the dream machinery, the use of which dates back to antiquity, works well and smoothly, and does not creak.

c. Authentication of Fantasy Adventures: attitude of narrative voice, point of view of protagonist

The fantasy adventures are authenticated by the point of view from which they are perceived in The Cuckoo Clock. Mrs Molesworth makes the auntly narrative voice appear implicitly to identify its attitude towards the fantasy adventures with the point of view of Griselda herself, indicating to the implicit hearers and the real reader that they may perceive them in a parallel way.

To begin with, Griselda believes in the supernatural. She responds immediately to Dorcas's suggestions that the 'good people' love the old house and that the cuckoo clock is a fairy clock (pp. 4-5, 28). (Mrs Molesworth used this function of Dorcas's stock role as superstitious countrywoman almost unchanged in the figure of the nurse of An Enchanted Garden.) When Griselda is awakened on her first night in the house and hears the call of the mechanical bird, just as she is wishing for spring, she wonders if she is in fairyland (p. 6). On her first conversation with the cuckoo she says

> "... of course you're not like a person, and — and — I've been told all sorts of queer things about what fairies like and don't like."
>
> "Who said I was a fairy?" inquired the cuckoo.
>
> "Dorcas did, and of course, my own common sense did too," replied Griselda. "You must be a fairy — you couldn't be anything else."
>
> "I might be a fairyfied cuckoo," suggested the bird. (p. 37)

Griselda takes the world of the fairy tale as having as much objective reality as the one in which she herself lives: she sees no difference between them. When she talks to the cuckoo she asks him to take her to goblin mines, or undersea to the mermaids '"not geography sort of places ... but queer places"' (p. 56).

Phil, who serves as a mirror for Griselda, also believes in fairies and takes them for his point of reference. He too has 'real' dreams about the cuckoo. He goes looking for him and tells Griselda that he believes that the cuckoo is a fairy (p. 139), he wants to find the way to fairyland (pp. 140, 141, 187, 194), he likes to talk about fairies (p. 140), he likes to play with flowers because the fairies are fond of them (p. 144), he calls a woodland glade a fairies' garden and builds a house for them there (p. 188).

However, Griselda is not perfectly certain as to whether her own perceptions and interpretations have the objective validity which they

seem to her to have. Her questionings are always positively resolved: she decides that her particular perceptions and interpretations are correct.

This has two implications: first, the potential unwillingness of the implicit hearers and the real reader to accept the fantasy is allowed a place within the narrative. In a way, they are given an indication that their reaction should be the same, by allowing for and allaying this unwillingness in the protagonist herself. Second, Griselda's questionings are directed away from the matter of whether the wooden cuckoo lives, to the validity of her other perceptions. This deflects the attention of the reader away from the basic assumption behind the fantasy, to secondary considerations.

More important in this context is the attitude of the narrative voice towards the questionings. When Griselda questions, her questions are echoed by the narrative voice. This has the implication that when Griselda is satisfied with the resolutions to her questions, the narrative voice is satisfied too. This serves as an indication to the implicit hearer and the real reader as to how to resolve their own potential unwillingness to accept the depiction of the suspension of physical law in the book.

The narrative voice echoes Griselda's questionings by using Erlebte Rede or the style indirect libre. G.W. Turner says that this 'rests on the "double speaker" of literature, the author who tells a story but also gives words to his character in dialogue. Sometimes the author appears to address us directly but uses words appropriate to a character in his novel'; i.e. he uses 'ambiguously direct or reported speech'.[1] In The Cuckoo Clock it is a matter of ambiguous thought: it is not

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1. Turner, op.cit., p. 142.

clear whether the questions are Griselda's thoughts to herself or the thoughts of the narrative voice directed at the implicit hearer. There are five important points in the narrative at which this device is employed and in each case these questions are almost immediately either preceded or followed by Griselda's questioning thoughts in direct speech, within inverted commas. This blurs the demarcation between Griselda and the narrative voice.

On the first night in the house Griselda wakes and wishes for spring. Her thoughts are in direct speech. Then

> she gave a great start. What was it she heard? Could her wish have come true? Was this fairyland ...? ... she was quite, quite sure that she had heard the cuckoo!
>
> ... Could it, after all, have been her fancy? She ... was just dropping off when — yes, there it was again ....
>
> (pp. 6-7)

Griselda's first question to herself would be 'What is it I hear? Can my wish have come true? The conventional way of reporting this is 'Griselda asked herself what it was she heard and wondered if her wish had come true.' By using the ambiguous 'Could her wish have come true?' the narrative voice is both reporting Griselda's own questionings of her perception and also slipping in questions on its own account. In this case, Griselda's perceptions are proved to be correct: she had heard a cuckoo.

On the next two occasions, it is a matter more of interpretation than perception. When Griselda throws the book,

> What had she done? ... Could it have been her fancy only that he had sprung back more hastily than he would have done but for her throwing the book at him?
>
> (pp. 20-21)

When Dorcas tells her that fairies leave an ill-tempered house, again

> Could it have been <u>her</u> doing that trouble was coming upon the old house?
>
> (p. 29)

In these two cases too, Griselda's interpretations of an occurrence seem to be correct: the cuckoo stops appearing, and she presumes it is because of his indignation at her action.

Griselda's perceptions and interpretations are thus established as reliable, and the narrative voice is identified at least with her questioning of her own perceptions, if not explicitly with their resolution. The hearer and reader are gradually being prepared to accept the fantasy adventures as Griselda accepts them, for she has been shown as a person who examines her own impressions, considering if they are distorted, and, at least on the first occasion, her impressions pass the examination.

Thus, on the next two occasions, Griselda doubts both the perception and interpretation, and this time these are no longer out of the way occurrences, but suspensions of physical law. After her return from the mandarins

> Could it have been a dream? (p. 74)

and after her seeing the pictures

> Had it been a dream only? Griselda could not make up her mind.
>
> (p. 87)

Now, the manipulation of the plot, the provision of concrete evidence, convinces her, and by implication the narrative voice who asked the questions with her.[1]

Stephen Ullmann says that style indirect libre is particularly suitable for the evocation of hallucinatory states of mind.[2] Griselda's

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1. Just as Griselda can make the distinction between dream and objective reality, so can Phil. He tells her that the cuckoo called him first in a dream, and later when he was not dreaming (p. 140). Here again, the point of view of the fictional experiencer goes a long way towards authentication of his experience, particularly when he is shown to be able to discriminate between dream and waking life.

2. Ullmann, Stephen, Style in the French Novel (1957), Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1964, pp. 101, 104.

entire perception of the fantasy objects and events in the novel may be viewed, with some justification, as a delusion. Mrs Molesworth uses this technique as a means of evoking a mistaken, even hallucinated perception, and then validating, as it were, that perception in the world of the narrative. The reader was first asked to accept that Griselda and the narrative voice question Griselda's perceptions about out of the way occurrences, and that Griselda's perceptions are explicitly correct in her own eyes and implicitly correct in those of the narrative voice. Now he is asked to accept the same thing about fantasy adventures. The device, used to this effect in the earlier part of the book, when the reader is being drawn in, is dropped after the first two fantasy adventures.

At certain points, however, when the narrative voice remains discreetly silent, there appear to be indications that although Griselda questions and validates her own perceptions, she tends not to draw the obvious conclusions from them. In the Country of Nodding Mandarins, when she recognises the palanquins, 'a feeling came over Griselda that she was dreaming' (p. 61). She takes this as a curious coincidence, as she takes the fact that the cuckoo's astronomical information is the same as her tutor's. In the same way she protects her illusion that the cuckoo is alive by rationalising his uncommunicativeness during the day, when she is fully awake, attributing it to the strange ways of fairies (pp. 44, 87, 132). And as she tells the cuckoo on her visit to the moon '"... I never tell anybody about what I see when I am with you"' (p. 175). The cuckoo says that this is a good thing and that she couldn't if she tried. At all these points, the reader is invited, as it were, to juxtapose his own perception of these matters with that of Griselda.

The second indication of the perspective from which the fantasy adventures are to be viewed is the network of references to faerie.

These occur in the book in two ways. The first vehicle for this is Griselda. Fairy lore and fairy tale are her point of reference. She thinks of and refers to fairies and fairyland (pp. 4, 29, 30, 41, 55-56, etc.), goblins and mermaids (p. 56), elves and sprites (p. 72), wood-elves, kobolds and fairy-kine (p. 132). More important in this context, she thinks of and refers to objects and characters in The Arabian Nights and The White Snake (p. 41), The Babes in the Wood (p. 72) and a story of a boy who stayed fifty years in fairyland (p. 177).[1] She asks the cuckoo to tell her fairy stories (p. 54).

The narrative voice too, in passing, compares Griselda and her aunts with The Three Bears (p. 9), or the garden path to 'the path leading to the cottage of Red Riding Hood's grandmother, or a path leading to fairyland itself' (p. 132).

When the auntly narrative voice emulates Griselda, also taking faerie as its point of reference, this serves as an indication of its attitude to the fantasy adventures. It does not indicate the literal belief of the auntly narrative voice. Rather, in emulating Griselda in the reference to faerie, the narrative voice is aligning the story which it is telling, a story of fantasy, with traditional folk lore and fairy tales, which also involve fantasy. One is seen to be like the other. Thus, the auntly narrative voice offers a covert invitation to the implicit hearer to respond in the same way to this fantasy novel as to a traditional folk tale, to suspend his disbelief in the same manner.

It should be noticed that Mrs Molesworth assumes that the real reader will know and recognise the references to faerie, particularly since most of the references are not to the tales by name, and that he likes and accepts them, at whatever level, naïve or sophisticated.

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1. There are many stories with this theme, and I cannot identify the one to which Griselda was referring. For examples, see E.S. Hartland, The Science of Fairy Tales, Walter Scott, London, 1891, Chapters VII to IX.

The use of the style indirect libre and the network of references to faerie involves the narrative voice adopting the same point of view as Griselda. In a variation of this, Griselda takes up a point of view first introduced by the narrative voice.

In the first few pages, the narrative voice archly mentions the rooks in the old garden, and gradually anthropomorphises them: she mentions their parliaments (p. 2), and says how Griselda's arrival set 'them all wondering what could be the matter' (p. 3). That night, as Griselda wonders if her aunts will like having a child with them, the narrative voice comments

> The very same thought that had occured to the rooks! They could not decide as to the fors and againsts at all, so they settled to put it to the vote ....
>
> (p. 5)

Just before this Dorcas has told Griselda that the rooks love the house (p. 4).

After these references, Griselda too is shown wondering if the rooks have more than the common qualities of birds. After she has thrown the book, 'the rooks seemed to know that something was the matter' and she thinks,

> "I am sure they are talking about me .... Perhaps they are fairies too. I am beginning to think I don't like fairies."
>
> (p. 30)

The device of viewing these birds anthropomorphically, metaphorically in the case of the narrative voice, and literally with Griselda, serves as a preparation for the great literal metamorphosis of the wooden bird. The day after Griselda's first brief interview with the cuckoo, when she wonders what he will do about her lack of play, a rook crows over her head, 'as if in answer to her thought' (p. 41). She looks at it and says,

> "Your voice isn't half so pretty as the cuckoo's, Mr Rook .... All the same, I daresay I should make friends with you, if I understood what you meant".
>
> (p. 41)

That night she has her first fantasy adventure with the cuckoo.

After Griselda first sees the cuckoo come alive, the device of viewing the rooks anthropomorphically has contributed its share to the authentication of the fantasy element in the book and they are never mentioned again.

In the same way, in the first chapter, the narrative voice seems intent on establishing the oldness of the house.[1] The novel begins

> Once upon a time in an old town, in an old street, there stood a very old house .... it belonged to a gone-by time — a time now quite passed away.
>
> (p. 1)

The people who live there 'had got so old that they could not get any older' (p. 2). The servants, horses, coachman, and even Griselda's godmother are old. Every object in the house is old (pp. 2, 3, 5, 10, 11). Not only does the narrative voice by this means establish the flavour of the antique and hence the romantic and mysterious, a device established by the Gothic novel, it also makes it clear that this narrative world is alien to the experience of the protagonist through whose eyes most of the action is seen.

Simultaneously with establishing that the house is old, the narrative voice establishes, with the artlessness that conceals art, that everything in the house is alien to 'normal' experience. When Dorcas leads Griselda to her room, the narrative voice comments 'It was a queer room, for everything in the house was queer' (p. 3). The walls have lights in them (p. 4). The account of Griselda's perceptions of the house take up this thread. As she gets into bed she thinks

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1. In The Wood-pigeons and Mary (1901), which is nearly as good as The Cuckoo Clock in establishing 'atmosphere', the old house has the same features as the house in The Cuckoo Clock, even to the passage which leads back unexpectedly to the point at which it began (The Cuckoo Clock, p. 15, The Wood-pigeons and Mary, Macmillan, London, 1901, pp. 71-72).

'"How strange and queer everything seems!"' (p. 5). When she wakes and hears the cuckoo she wonders if her aunts have a tame cuckoo:

> "I don't think I ever heard of such a thing, but this is such a queer house, everything seems different in it ...." (p. 7)

The next morning the narrative voice comments that, 'The old house looked quite as queer and quaint by daylight as it had seemed the evening before' (p. 11). The slight distance of the narrative voice is apparent: it has moved from 'was' to 'seemed'. The focus, as always, is on Griselda, who towards the end of the chapter reiterates her impressions '"What a very funny house it is, Aunt Grizzel," she said ...' (p. 16). The queerness of the house is never mentioned again.

The attitude of the narrative voice parallels Griselda's point of view. This indicates that in the world of the novel 'everything seems different' and is. The implicit hearer and real reader are thus forewarned that their points of view should be parallel; that they should accept occurrences here that are 'different' to the extent that physical law can be suspended.

The authentication of the fantasy adventures depends in great part on the identification of the point of view of the adult narrative voice with that of the child protagonist of the novel. Barbara Brook asserts that Dickens 'evolved the narrative method that relies on the sensible establishment of the relationship between adult narrator and child observer', to 'convey the immediacy of the child's experience'.[1] Mrs Brook considers children's authors prior to Dickens as well as authors of adult books, and sees that none had used this method of using the adult narrative voice to convey the childish point of view. She says that Maria Edgeworth, for example, in her stories for children, created

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1. Brook, Barbara, Dickens' Child Characters: the technique of child characterisation in four novels, A.N.U. Ph.D. thesis, 1976, pp. iv, 78.

credible characters,

> but at no point does the novelist herself identify this particularising vision with the perception of a child character, nor does she vary the tone of a continuous adult narrative voice.[1]

Dickens used the adult narrative voice adopting the childish point of view for social criticism, as in Oliver Twist, or to explore human relationships, as in David Copperfield. Mrs Molesworth used the basic method of which Dickens was the first exponent. But she shifted the emphasis from the adult narrative voice using the childish point of view, to the childish point of view complemented by the apparently analogous adult narrative voice. Her novel was not directed at adults, except incidentally, and her use of the childish point of view on the part of the adult narrative voice was to persuade the reader of the artistic validity of the suspension of physical law which makes the work a fantasy.

When considering the manipulation of the points of view to authenticate the fantasy element in The Cuckoo Clock, it must be stressed that all the devices work simultaneously, together with the psychological factors that make the deprived child a fit protagonist of the fantasy adventures. The attitude expressed by the narrative voice works together with the psychological basis of Griselda's fantasy adventures to make them artistically acceptable.

d. 'Indeterminacy'

I have so far stressed that the attitude of the narrative voice tends to coincide with the point of view of Griselda. This identification is of course not consistent, since obviously the narrative voice can distance itself from Griselda to comment on or describe Griselda's

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1. Ibid., p. 3.

adventures. But the attitudes of the narrative voice are not totally consistent. What is involved is a sort of tension that arises from the implications of various statements, not contradictory statements as such. This is not a flaw. Wolfgang Iser, in an essay on indeterminacy in narrative, makes the point that the 'gaps' between various 'schematised views' in fiction give rise to indeterminacy. The reader is thereby given a chance to 'build his own bridges' between the gaps, thus positively participating in the work.[1] 'Wolfgang Iser's neat formula has it [that] "the repair of indeterminacy" is what gives rise to the 'generation of meaning'.[2] I will consider two examples of this indeterminacy in The Cuckoo Clock.

At one point the narrative voice seems to explicitly affirm that the cuckoo is a fairy. The day after her first interview with the cuckoo, Griselda sits in the ante-room where the clock is,

> And she didn't speak to the cuckoo .... She felt it was better to wait till he gave her some sign ....
>
> For fairies, you know, children, however charming, are sometimes rather queer to have to do with. They don't like to be interfered with, or treated except with very great respect, and they have their own ideas about what is proper and what isn't, I can assure you.
>
> (pp. 44-45)

There is archness, but no irony or ambiguity here. Yet, the same narrative voice can comment, when Griselda 'fancies' in the garden, that

> ... Griselda's head was crammed full, perfectly full, of fairy lore; and the mandarins' country, and butterfly-land, were quite as real to her as the every-day world around her.
>
> (p. 133)

There is the obvious implication that the narrative voice is

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1. Iser, Wolfgang, 'Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response' in Aspects of Narrative, ed. J. Hillis Miller, Columbia U.P., New York etc., 1971, pp. 1-46.

2. Kermode, Frank, The Classic, Faber and Faber, London, 1975, p. 131.

disassociating itself from Griselda's naïve belief. It seems the lands are physically real to Griselda only, not to the narrative voice. In the same way, at the end of the book, the comment on Griselda's farewell to the cuckoo runs:

> ... there were tears for the one [friend] she felt she had said farewell to, even though he was only a cuckoo in a clock.
>
> (p. 196)

The cuckoo has been presented as friend, playmate, guide and more to Griselda. Yet, at the end of the book these qualities are not mentioned: he is only a cuckoo in a clock, says the narrative voice, cutting the figure down to size, and divesting him of all his fantasy qualities.

In this way, the narrative voice shifts from attitude to attitude, and the reader has to bridge the gaps between them.

The structuralist critic Todorov defines what he calls the 'genre of the fantastic' by the hesitant response of the reader; to be fantastic the work must fulfil three conditions:

> First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus the reader's role is so to speak entrusted to a character, and at the same time the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work — in the case of a naïve reading, the actual reader identifies himself with a character. Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as "poetic" interpretations.[1]

Todorov further says that when the reader makes his decision the work ceases to be fantastic and becomes either uncanny or marvellous.

I have defined a work as fantasy if it depicts physical laws (or common notions thereof) as being suspended, and many works which I consider fantasy do away with any hesitation as to the explanation

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1. Todorov, Tzvetan, The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre (1970), tr. Richard Howard, The Press of Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland etc., 1973, p. 33.

of this suspension; I also see no reason not to adopt an allegorical reading if so warranted. Yet Todorov's account seems to me to throw light on the quality of The Cuckoo Clock. He cites only two works in which the hesitation he sees as essential to the fantastic continues after the work has finished being read: The Turn of the Screw and La Venus d'Ille. I would suggest that The Cuckoo Clock is one of the few fantasy novels for children that would be an example of Todorov's genre of the fantastic: the reader may be fairly sure one way or another whether Griselda's adventures have a supernatural explanation (they happened) or not (they are dreams), but he can never be sure which opinion is the 'correct' one, and whether his identification with the protagonist is to be naïve and total or modified by his own sophisticated perception of the protagonist's reality.

Mrs Molesworth maintains an 'indeterminacy' or 'hesitation' about the nature of the totality of the events presented in The Cuckoo Clock: by her skilful use of dream machinery, identification of the attitude of the narrative voice with the point of view of the protagonist, and by the contrary implications of certain statements of the narrative voice itself. There is one other striking 'indeterminacy', caused by the different ways in which the book begins and ends.

In a way, the reader has been led into the fantasy world of the novel by the persuasive narrative voice, and this same narrative voice attempts to lead the reader out of it again, back to his own 'real' world, where wooden cuckoos are only mechanisms in clocks, and make-believe lands only as true as fairy lore.

The authentication of the fantasy adventures by the network of references to traditional fairy tales is anticipated by the opening phrase of the book: 'Once upon a time'. When such diverse figures as Bruno Bettelheim and Aidan Warlow discuss this formula in the context of the European folk tale they agree on its implications. Bettelheim

asserts that the opening formula of the folk tale 'makes it amply clear that the stories take place on a very different level from everyday reality'.[1] And Aidan Warlow goes further, saying that all the conventions of the European folk tale are 'immediately and unquestioningly assumed by us the moment we see the words "Once upon a time ...."'[2]

One of the expectations aroused by the use of the opening formula of the traditional folk tale is that all the relevant action will take place within the tale: it is framed, as it were, by the opening formula which implies the closing formula '... and they lived happily ever after' or its equivalent. There is no curiosity aroused as to what sort of life Cinderella lived with her prince, it is assumed to be unmixed bliss.

The Cuckoo Clock explicitly denies this expectation: Griselda does not live happily ever after, for the narrative voice denies the expectation of the point of view implied by its use of the opening formula. The Cuckoo Clock ends on an indeterminate note:

> In the morning, when Griselda awoke, her pillow was wet with tears. Thus many stories end. She was happy, very happy in the thought of her kind new friends; but there were tears for the one she felt she had said farewell to, even though he was only a cuckoo in a clock.
>
> (p. 196)

In concluding, the narrative voice again calls attention to the fact that Griselda exists only in a story, but it is a different kind of story from that which was implied at the beginning, when 'Once upon a time' indicated that what was about to be told was Märchen, not pseudo-chronicle. Here, the narrative voice has implicitly shifted its attitude. Unlike the stories of the protagonists of traditional folk tale, the story of Griselda does not end at the end of the

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1. Bettelheim, Bruno, The Uses of Enchantment, Thames and Hudson, London, 1976, p. 117.

2. Warlow, Aidan, 'Kinds of Fiction: Towards a Heirarchy of Veracity', The Cool Web, ed. Margaret Meek et.al., Bodley Head, London, 1977, p. 101.

narrative: she will go on to a life which cannot be dismissed with a formula like 'happily ever after'. The novel ends not with unmixed happiness, but a bittersweet mixture of tears and joy. Mrs Molesworth thus poises the novel between the 'real' non-fantastic world in which novels are generally set and the fantasy world of the traditional fairy tale.[1] This is partially achieved by the nature of the fantasy adventures in the novel, and partially by the shifts in the attitude of the narrative voice.

In general, the reader of the novel is not likely to be confused as to what stand he is expected to take towards what goes on in it, since he is guided by the indications of the narrative voice to the implicit hearers. Nevertheless, while talking about the indications which Mrs Molesworth gives the real reader through the narrative voice, it should not be assumed that the narrative voice does all the reader's work for him. The Cuckoo Clock may be an enlargement and rehashing of 'The Reel Fairies', but perhaps the reason that it is so much better is that it has points of 'indeterminacy', that its reader can read it at either a naïve or a sophisticated level or at both simultaneously. The reader of The Cuckoo Clock is forced to make discriminations and judgements for himself, 'generate meaning', participate in the narrative, enjoy himself.

e. Control of Distance

Griselda is the model child, but she is not the ideal, perfect child. The problem with presenting this kind of character is that in creating sympathy for her, her faults may be in danger of being disregarded. A balance must be maintained between sympathising with her

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1. It should be noticed that while aligning the fantasy novel with the Märchen, the narrative voice needs to make assertions about the nature of fairies, and to question the perceptions of the protagonists about their existence, in a manner unthinkable in a Märchen.

and condemning her faults.

When one considers what a Mrs Sherwood could have made of Griselda's faults and lapses it is apparent that sympathy for Griselda must be established by the way in which she is presented, quite apart from the extenuating circumstances, her other virtues, readiness to repent, and low emotional resistance to pressure which I mentioned earlier. In his analysis of Jane Austen's Emma, Wayne Booth says

> the solution to the problem of maintaining sympathy despite almost crippling faults was primarily to use the heroine herself as a kind of narrator, though in third person, reporting on her own experience,

using a 'sympathetic inside view'.[1] This is precisely what Mrs Molesworth does as well.[2] Most of the story is seen through Griselda's eyes, and thus Mrs Molesworth ensured that we travel with Griselda, rather than stand against her. As in the case of Emma

> the sustained inside view leads the reader to hope for good fortune for the character with whom he travels, quite independently of the qualities revealed.[3]

Through the book the narrative voice stays with Griselda. There are only four points of any importance at all at which Griselda is absent. At all those four points Miss Grizzel and Miss Tabitha are shown talking about what should be done about Griselda: on the first

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1. Booth, Wayne, The Rhetoric of Fiction, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1961, pp. 245-246.

2. Roger Lancelyn Green has several times referred to Mrs Molesworth as 'the Jane Austen of the nursery' ('Mrs Molesworth and her Books', op.cit., p. 374; Tellers of Tales, op.cit., p. 115; B.H.M., op.cit., p. 59). Since he also calls her the 'Trollope of the nursery' ('Mrs Molesworth', op.cit., p. 101) it may be inferred that he is referring to the proverbial limited range, 'the two inches of ivory' and the preoccupation with 'manners', and not to the narrative technique of these writers. Mrs Molesworth had read Jane Austen. Hathercourt Rectory reads like a retelling of Pride and Prejudice, and Lady Harriet Dunstan in Blanche reminds one irresistibly of Lady Catherine de Burgh. Mrs Molesworth refers to 'dear Miss Austen' in 'Fiction: Its Use and Abuse' in Studies and Stories, A.D. Innes, London, 1893, p. 243.

3. Booth, op.cit., p. 246.

occasion wondering how she acquired her knowledge of family history (p. 90), then deciding to recall her tutor (pp. 93-94); wondering whether they have done right in recalling him (p. 99); and then discussing her conduct, after she has been rude to them about being forbidden to play with Phil, among themselves and with Dorcas (pp. 151-154). In all these cases Griselda is the centre of attention, even though she is not physically present. And in three out of the four cases, these portions begin by including Griselda and continue for some moments after Griselda has left the room or fallen asleep.

Otherwise, the reader is never privileged to see the aunts or any other character alone, or in any context which does not involve Griselda. When they go with Griselda to Lady Lavander, the reader is privileged to follow (p. 23), when they go without her, the narrative voice remains with Griselda till they return (p. 77). When Miss Grizzel goes to consult Lady Lavander about the propriety of Griselda's playing with Phil, the result of this visit is summarily reported, there is no description of the discussion. In the same way, even Phil is only shown when Griselda is with him. The narrative voice never considers him alone. Given the very limited number of characters in the book, this travelling with Griselda is even more effective.

As with Emma, 'sympathy ... can be heightened by witholding inside views of others as well as by granting them of her'.[1] There is only one important point where a glimpse into Miss Grizzel's mind is vouchsafed. After Griselda has been told that her tutor will be recalled, she sulks, and

> Miss Grizzel said nothing more, but to herself she thought that Mr Kneebreeches had not been recalled any too soon.
> (p. 96)

Again, this thought centres upon Griselda, and is only included to

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1. Ibid., p. 249.

indicate Miss Grizzel's good sense and responsible character as a guardian, not to give any insight. In the same way, all accounts of Dorcas's thoughts centre upon Griselda, and there is no insight vouchsafed into the maid's character (pp. 29, 75, 154, 185). Thus, all the characters apart from the protagonist are sketched from the outside, not from within.

In the same way, the aunts, who are the most important secondary characters, are typed by their behaviour as 'voice and echo' in the very first chapter. This is an improvement on Countess Kate where Yonge gives accounts of the histories and motives and inner workings of all the characters, distracting the attention from Kate herself, which detracts from the unity of the book.

Griselda is examined in depth. But the very names of the other characters are shorthand indications of their functions in relation to her and to the plot. They are typed efficiently, and once and for all, their characterisations going no further: Grizzel, the old; Tabitha, who 'look[s] wonderfully like an old cat' (p. 151); Dorcas, with its pastoral associations from The Winter's Tale which is in keeping with her social status, her references to cows and hens, her superstitious belief in fairies; Mr Kneebreeches, the tutor, because he is old-fashioned enough to wear them (p. 18); Lady Lavander, bearing the fragrance of an aristocratic thirteenth-century Norman name; even Phil, with its associations of philia or love seems particularly appropriate as the name of a loving little boy.

Not only are the internal views of other characters withheld, there is remarkably little background description. Griselda and her aunts and Phil have no surname, Phil's mother has no name at all, the old city is never named, we are never told where Griselda came from overseas, what her father did, what her mother died of and when, or

even Griselda's exact age. There are descriptions, fairly minute, of individuals and objects relevant to the plot — grey-eyed, curly-haired Griselda herself, the ante-room crowded with ornaments, the mandarins, the cuckoo clock itself, the garden — but no general background details are given. Griselda is the sole focus of the book, and even in her case the focus is an 'inner', psychological one.

In all these ways, Mrs Molesworth ensures that the reader stays close to Griselda and willy-nilly sympathises and empathises with her. As with Emma, correctives are needed and provided so that her faults are not obscured, but placed in the correct perspective. The correctives are of course, the cuckoo who is never slow to point out Griselda's errors to her, and to a much lesser extent Miss Grizzel, who rightly insists on hard work. As a result the reader can never minimise Griselda's faults, even though hers are the eyes through which the story is seen to unfold.

Again, as with Emma, there are times when the protagonist and 'her author are far apart, and the author's direct guidance aids the reader in his own break with [her]'.[1] The narrative voice analyses and comments upon the impulses and motives of Griselda of which she herself is only dimly aware. She sulks after she is told that her tutor will be recalled, and the narrative voice first describes how all her present pleasures pall, and how she grumbles to herself, and then comments

> In her secret heart I fancy she was half in hopes that the cuckoo would come out again, and talk things over with her. Even if he were to scold her, she felt it would be better than sitting there alone with nobody to speak to, which was very dull work indeed. At the bottom of her conscience there lurked the knowledge that what she should be doing was to be looking over her last lessons ... but alas! knowing one's duty is by no means the same thing as doing it, and Griselda sat on by the window doing nothing but grumble and work herself up into a belief that she was one of the most-to-be-pitied little girls in all the world.

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1. Booth, op.cit., p. 257.

> So that by the time Dorcas came to call her to tea, I doubt if she had a single pleasant thought or feeling left in her heart.
>
> (p. 98)

> She just huddled into bed, huddling up her mind in an untidy hurry and confusion, just as she left her clothes in an untidy heap on the floor. She would not look into herself, was the truth of it; she shrank from doing so because she knew things had been going on in that silly little heart of hers in a most unsatisfactory way all day ....
>
> (p. 100)

When she asks abruptly to play with the little boy she met in the garden:

> Griselda knew she was not making her request in a very amiable or becoming manner; she knew, indeed, that she was making it in such a way as was almost certain to lead to its being refused; and yet, though she was really so very, very anxious to get leave to play with little Phil, she took a sort of spiteful pleasure in injuring her own cause.
>
> How foolish ill-temper makes us! Griselda had allowed herself to get so angry at the thought of being thwarted that had her aunt [agreed] ... she would really, in a strange distorted sort of way, have been disappointed.
>
> (p. 149)

These are Griselda's thoughts and feelings, but not reproduced as she thought and felt them. The narrative voice is making it quite clear that it is keeping the focus on Griselda, keeping Griselda's focus on the world quite credibly, but extending it. With the combination of comment and description, the sympathy for Griselda is preserved, since Griselda's impulses and motives are not fully articulated to herself; at the same time her faults of bad temper and hastiness are condemned. They are then condemned even further, when the plot entails that the cuckoo gently shows Griselda on each occasion that she must 'obey orders' and not give in to either fault.

The distancing of the narrative voice from the protagonist should be considered together with the gentle irony that is frequently directed at Griselda. This irony I mentioned as a method by which the narrative voice establishes a relationship with its implicit

hearers, but it is equally relevant here.

Mrs Molesworth thus maintains the balance between a too-complete sympathy and identification with the child protagonist Griselda and an overly condemnatory attitude towards her faults. She presents The Cuckoo Clock almost as a first person novel told in the third person, which is all the more the case since the auntly narrative voice is a simulated childish voice. And she balances this by having the narrative voice dissociate itself from the child protagonist in occasional passages of mingled summary, description and commentary.

f. Patterns

Angela Bull says of The Cuckoo Clock that 'the plot has a well-rounded unity lacking in many of Mrs Molesworth's books'.[1] 'Plot' is perhaps not the best word to use in this connection. It may be said that the novel consists of four episodes, each revolving around a fantasy adventure, and that these episodes are virtually sealed off from each other, with no causal connection between them. Yet the novel does give the impression of unity, which is in part due to the various patterns that can be discerned in it.

The four episodes alternate between Griselda viewed in isolation, and Griselda viewed in relation to another child. The first episode occupies the first four chapters. These deal with Griselda only, and their core is the visit to the mandarins. The second episode is contained in Chapter 5 which deals with Griselda in relation to Sybilla. The third episode takes up Chapters 6 and 7. The focus returns to Griselda in isolation, and the core of these chapters is her visit to the butterflies. The fourth episode occupies the last four chapters.

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1. Bull, Angela, Preface to The Cuckoo Clock, Garland, New York, 1976, p. vi.

These deal with Griselda in relation to another child, Phil, with her nocturnal visits to him, and to the moon, where he again appears. The balance of the book is immediately apparent, with the two lengthy episodes of four chapters framing the two shorter episodes between them.

There is a slight connection between the second and third episodes. The cold which made Griselda want to stay at home and watch pictures of Sybilla led to her laziness and bad temper which were corrected by her visit to Butterfly Land, However, Griselda's adventures do not occur at exact temporal intervals. Yet the causal gap between the first and second episodes is paralleled by that between the third and fourth episodes, and this camouflages the fact that the temporal gap between the third and fourth episodes is much greater than that between the first and second episodes.[1]

The adventures of Griselda are 'framed' in that they are bounded at the beginning and end of the book by dreams which are explicitly dreams and nothing more (pp. 26, 195). The neatness of this device must be admired: mere dreams form the boundaries of a period of heightened experience, which can be seen as a period of intensified dreaming.

It is also important that each of Griselda's four fantasy adventures — always preceded by a soft 'cuckoo' and the sound associated with the whirring of machinery (pp. 14, 78) — follows the pattern of her experience on her first night in the house. On the first night she sleeps, wakes on hearing the cuckoo's call, sleeps again, and wakes again in the morning. No fantasy adventures occur. On subsequent occasions, however, Griselda sleeps, wakes on hearing the cuckoo's call,

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1. It should, however, be noticed that the division into chapters of the book is less than perfect, for Griselda's visit to the mandarins, which occupies Chapters 1 to 4, overflows into Chapter 5, 'Pictures'. Chapter 5 thus contains the tail-end of the first episode and the whole of the second, which is causally unconnected with it.

talks to him, has adventures with him, sleeps, to wake again in the morning. On these occasions, though the first waking is only apparent, and since the pattern of sleeping and waking follows the pattern of sleeping and waking on the first night in the house, they carry more credibility.

In the same way, the first actual fantasy adventure (the visit to the mandarins) is led up to by two long talks which Griselda has with the cuckoo: the first on the night on which she apologises to him for throwing the book, and the second just before the journey. On the subsequent adventures, the talks with the cuckoo are much shorter, for it has been established that they are no longer extra-ordinary.

Again, preliminary to her first talks with the cuckoo in the first episode, Griselda goes to him, approaches the mana-invested clock, in order that something may happen. In every subsequent episode, it is the cuckoo who comes to Griselda, for it has been firmly established that she need not go to the clock for him to talk to her, for he now has an independent existence.

Though the fantasy adventures which form the core of each episode all provide the same fulfilments for Griselda, they form part of an expanding series. The preliminary to her first adventure takes place in the cosy interior of the cuckoo's house, and the actual adventure in the grand hall of the mandarins, which represents an expansion. The second episode occurs in another series of interiors, in Germany and at home, to move out again to an exterior scene. The third adventure does not take place indoors at all, but in an open garden. And the fourth episode takes Griselda furthest afield of all: she flies on the cuckoo's back to the moon. The first episode had had her jumping up to the clock, and spreading her cloak and moving to the mandarin

country, both of which are emblematic movements outward. In the same way, it should be noticed that Griselda's fantasy adventures encompass a very wide sphere: the east, with the mandarins, and the west, with the old clock-maker, underground to Butterfly Land, which is 'down here' (p. 116), and above ground, to the moon.

Max Luthi points out that the folk tale tends to fall into isolated episodes, with each subsequent episode resembling the previous one, but by a process of 'stylised intensification' growing larger and larger in scope.[1] He also points out that the folk tale tends to include the whole cosmos, the heavens and the earth, and to establish man securely in it.[2] Griselda's adventures are isolated from each other, they tend to resemble each other, growing larger and larger in scope. They too include east and west, the heavens and the earth. Too great an identification of The Cuckoo Clock with the folk tale, would be a mistake, however, for it is not an attempt to write in the folk tale style. What is interesting is that in writing a fantasy novel with a didactic purpose, examining character in depth and pointing an obvious moral in a way in which the folk tale never does, Mrs Molesworth tended to move towards traditional folk tale patterns of isolated, repeated and expanding incident. She was herself obviously steeped in folk fairy tales, as were, presumably, her readers, so there is no need to draw any conclusion that would suggest that structurally, all fantasy novels have necessarily anything in common with the folk tale.

In a very broad sense, it may be said that the book depicts a pattern of movement from negative to positive. I mentioned, when talking about Griselda's reward, the connection between the movement from inside to outside, which coincides with the movement from winter

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1. Luthi, op.cit., p. 54.

2. Ibid., p. 94 and passim.

to spring, both literal and metaphorical. These three movements also coincide with the larger internal movement of childhood and imagination to adulthood and deeper understanding which is part of the Bildungsroman. All the negatives are indicated in Chapter 1, while the positives are arrived at in Chapters 8 and 11, which are complementary.

The pattern of movement from inside to outside is underlined by Mrs Molesworth's use of an almost cinematic technique.[1] Chapter 1 describes in great detail the movement inside. Griselda's father brings her to the house, then she is taken

> Up the shallow, wide, old-fashioned staircase, past the wainscoted walls ... down a long narrow passage with many doors ... to the room prepared for her.
>
> (p. 3)

In the intervening chapters, apart from Griselda's dream flights outward with the cuckoo, there are no portrayals of Griselda outside the house. On the one specific occasion when she is shown going to visit Lady Lavander, only her departure and return are described, not the journey, and Lady Lavander's house is another interior. In Chapter 8, when spring arrives, it is underlined that 'Hitherto, you see, she had been able to see very little of the outside of her aunts' house' (p. 130). Not only are the journeys on which the cuckoo takes Griselda foreshadowings of the actual movement Griselda will make from inside to outside, from house to garden, but the actual movement does not stop at the garden: once out, Griselda can move even further afield: to the glade in the wood beyond the garden. This final movement is a metaphorical indication of her broadening mental horizons and of the larger society with which she is to come in contact, the society represented by Phil's parents.

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1. See pp. 122-123 of this thesis.

The pattern of movement from one season to another, encompassing a year, is also well presented. In Chapter 1, when Griselda arrives, and during her first two adventures, it is autumn. Three times during her first night in the house she longs for spring or summer (p. 6). Summer lingers on in the house in the scent of Miss Grizzel's pot-pourri (p. 11). By the time she goes to Butterfly Land, it is winter, and her longing for spring is fulfilled there. By the time of her next adventure, the actual summer has arrived.

It is particularly appropriate that it should be a cuckoo who is Griselda's companion and friend during the winter of her discontent. He is an emblem of spring — the traditional medieval emblem of 'the merry cuckoo, messenger of spring'.

But in a more subtle way, the book is unified by a recurrent image-cluster: the song, spring or summer, and the pastoral garden or wood, which together act as a leitmotif.

In Chapter 1, the actual garden is briefly described:

> the back windows looked out upon a beautiful, quaintly terraced garden, with old trees growing so thick and close together that in summer it was like living on the edge of a forest to be near them ....
>
> (pp. 2-3)

From the first, the garden is interchangeable with a forest or wood. In the first chapter, then, though it is late autumn, the garden is expressly associated with summer.

When Griselda goes to the mandarins, the cuckoo sings for the company, and

> It made Griselda think of woods in summer, and of tinkling brooks flowing through them ... of the babes in the wood and the robins covering them up with leaves ....
>
> (pp. 71-72)

Here there is no real garden, wood or forest, but the song, the summer, and vegetation are linked.

On Griselda's second adventure, again the cuckoo sings, and again, the same connections are made:

> Again they made Griselda think of little rippling brooks in summer, and now and then there came a sort of hum as of insects buzzing in the warm sunshine near.
>
> (p. 79)

But this is not all. In the same episode, when Griselda sees Sybilla's funeral,

> She saw before her a country road in full summer time; the sun was shining, the birds were singing, the trees covered with their bright green leaves ... //... there fell upon the ear the sounds of sweet music, lovelier far than she had heard before ....
>
> (pp. 85-86)

The song of the cuckoo and the song of Sybilla conjure up the same images.

Griselda's third adventure of course takes place in a garden, in spring, with the brooks and trees and insects that she has hitherto only seen in her mind's eye. However, as in the description of the real garden in Chapter 1, there is no song.

And then, Griselda's fourth adventure is preceded by her experience of the real garden outside the house, in spring and summer. This is described in detail, but there are no significant variations: the plants, flowers, birds, insects, and even the brook and wood are present (pp. 129-33). This, we may presume, is the real garden which has inspired her dreams.

However, the adventures are not over, and though Griselda does not visit woods or gardens on the way to visit Phil or on the way to the moon, because she has what she wants already, at the end of the book, the same things again appear, in real life, this time, but unconnected with the garden outside the house:

> It was a sort of tiny glade in the very middle of the wood — a little green nest enclosed all around by trees, and right through it the merry brook came rippling along ... all the choicest and sweetest of the early summer flowers seemed to be collected here ....
>
> (p. 188)

It is evident, then, that this cluster of images occurs again and again, three times through the narrator's description of Griselda's external surroundings, twice through the description of the images evoked by song, and once through the narrator's descriptions of one of Griselda's dream landscapes. More than any causal connection, I think, these descriptions make for the underlying unity of the book, linking its various parts together.

On the garden, I would like to quote Philippa Pearce. Talking about Tom's Midnight Garden, she says

> The garden provided a powerful image of childhood. The walled garden — the old hortus conclusus — represents the sheltered security of early childhood. But Tom climbs the high garden wall ....[1]

Both The Cuckoo Clock and Tom's Midnight Garden are novels about children growing up, and what Miss Pearce says about the unifying image of her book may be said, mutatis mutandis, with equal validity about The Cuckoo Clock.

The pattern of the book — from negative to positive — is not too obvious. This is evident on a consideration of the last four chapters. Chapter 8 opens with a description of the arrival of spring and Griselda's consequent movement outside. When she meets Phil there is an anticipation of the movement from deprivation to fulfilment in her afternoon of play with him. There is also a hint that she is more mature than she was earlier, in the way she tells him about being very good. However, in Chapter 9, there is a threat to Griselda's happiness, when it appears that she will not be allowed to play with Phil. In Chapter 10, the cuckoo again needs to emphasise to her that she can reach the true fairyland only by herself. In Chapter 11, however, the

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1. Pearce, A. Philippa, 'Tom's Midnight Garden', Chosen for Children; An Account of the Books which have been awarded the Library Association Carnegie Medal, 1936-1965 (1957), Library Association, London, 1967, p. 96.

movement is complete — Griselda not only finds play but a mother as well, thus making her fulfilment complete. Her increased maturity is now evidenced by her almost adult understanding of the nature of the true fairyland. By anticipating the completed movement of Chapter 11 by indications in Chapter 8, after an intervening fantasy adventure in Chapters 9 and 10, Mrs Molesworth avoids too obvious a contrast between the Griselda of the beginning and end of the book, thus reinforcing the idea that childhood is a period of gradual growth.

The Cuckoo Clock has thus a structural unity in its use of various patterns, though there is no effect of complete symmetry or mere mechanical regularity.

'THE STORY OF SUNNY' (1880)

... great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung ...
Of forests and enchantments drear
Where more is meant than meets the ear.

Milton, 'Il Penseroso'

Of course you can allegorise it. You can allegorise anything, whether in art or real life.

C.S. Lewis, 'On Criticism'

I consider below 'The Story of Sunny', a Kunstmärchen by Mrs Molesworth, comprising the fourth and fifth chapters of A Christmas Child (1880), published by Macmillan. It is no longer in print. The firm of Macmillan published 38 of Mrs Molesworth's books, usually at Christmas. She probably had a contract with them. They inform me that 30,000 copies of the novel were printed, the last being dated 1912.[1] By 1906 it had been reprinted nine times, in at least three formats. I selected 'The Story of Sunny' for analysis because I think it is the best of all Mrs Molesworth's short Kunstmärchen.

A. THE ALLEGORICAL KUNSTMÄRCHEN

'The Story of Sunny' is simple. A giant has blocked up a path through the mountain which he owns, thereby depriving of sunshine the people who live in the forest beside it. No sunshine can penetrate the forest, and they cannot reach the open air, because their own means of getting to it has been closed. Sunny, a little girl, reforms the giant by serving him and brings the sunshine back to her people.

It is clear that this is a Kunstmärchen, not a fantasy short story, since the figure of the giant is a motif obviously derived from the traditional Märchen. Though children are not often the protagonists of Märchen, Sunny's feat is obviously reminiscent of those of Hop-o'-My-Thumb from France, Hansel and Gretel from Germany and the native Jack, both of Beanstalk and Giant-killer fame, who overcome evil, powerful fantasy beings. 'Person as servant in ogre's house' is Motif G 462

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1. Kennedy, Jean, Permissions Editor, Macmillan, in a letter to me dated November 24, 1978. In comparison, 74,000 copies of The Cuckoo Clock were published by Macmillan alone, by 1971, the year in which the Molesworth copyright expired.

according to the classification of folk-tale motifs.[1] Unlike the fantasy novel and short story, 'The Story of Sunny' does not attempt to characterise 'real people' in psychological depth. Sunny is a stylised figure, in no sense of the term a 'real' child.

Since the novel is a genre characterised by psychological realism of characterisation, Mrs Molesworth could use it to present a 'model' yet 'real' child, as part of her moral intention. The reasons for her use of the Kunstmärchen, also to a didactic end, are rather different, and lead to an historical consideration of how Kunstmärchen became 'approved' and 'acceptable' reading for children.

Surveys of children's literature document how, during the nineteenth century, Märchen ceased to incur the opprobrium of responsible adults. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, the 'rationalist' Mrs Trimmer disapproved of various editions of Märchen, on the grounds that they 'fill the heads of children with confused notions of wonderful and supernatural events'; that they excited 'unreasonable and groundless fears', and that 'the generality of tales of this kind [did not] supply any moral instruction level to the infantine capacity'.[2] Equally the evangelical Mrs Sherwood remarked that since fairy-tales could not introduce Christian principles as motives of action, they could not be morally useful, and were to be shunned.[3]

But the moral inutility of Märchen was not a universal opinion, and though the comments of the Romantics were private, they protested against it early in the century. Coleridge said that tales of 'giants

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1. Thompson, Motif-Index ..., op.cit.

2. Trimmer, Sarah, various extracts on Märchen from The Guardian of Education 1802-1805, in Suitable for Children: Controversies in Children's Literature, ed. Nicholas Tucker, Sussex University Press, London, 1976, p. 38; also pp. 37-41 passim.; see also A.P.G., op. cit., pp. 19-22.

3. Sherwood, Mary, quoted Avery, Nineteenth Century Children, op.cit., p. 41.

and magicians and genii' gave 'the mind a love of the Great and the Whole'.[1] Lamb disapproved of Mrs Barbauld's and 'Mrs Trimmer's nonsense', contrasting them with the 'Tales and old wives' fables', 'which made the child a man, while all the time he suspected himself to be no bigger than a child'.[2] In Book Five of The Prelude Wordsworth praised Märchen at several points, because, in reading them, 'the child ... doth reap// One precious gain, that he forgets himself' (ll. 368-369). In Germany, Schiller had said, 'Deeper meaning resides in the fairy tales told to me in my childhood than in the truth that is taught by life.'[3]

In 1809, Benjamin Tabart produced a volume of Märchen retold, which turned all the old chapbook material into exemplary tales, so that there should be no question about their moral usefulness. And in 1823, the first English translation of Grimms' Fairy Tales appeared.

The interesting point is that by the mid-century not only had Märchen been more or less accepted as at least not pernicious, partly on the grounds that they stretched their readers' imaginations, but their inherent or natural morality was being contrasted with the forced and false moral lessons of contemporary, original works for children, and 'moralised' versions of the Märchen themselves.

In 1853, a reviewer of a new edition of Grimm said that

> We are also inclined to think, that a considerable per contra to any aspect of triviality is to be found in the superior moral tendency (as it appears to us) of these tales to that of professedly moral fictions. The former are less selfish and worldly-wise than the latter, — more truly good, and more spontaneous in their goodness. The one class aims at making us "respectable members of

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1. Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, Letters, ed. E.H. Coleridge, Heinemann, London, 1895, Vol. 1, p. 16.

2. Lamb, Charles, Letters, ed. E.V. Lucas, Dent, London, 1935, Vol. 1, p. 326.

3. Quoted by Bettelheim, op.cit., p. 5.

> society," — the other seeks to mould us into thoroughly kind, just, and considerate human beings.[1]

In the same year Dickens protested against George Cruikshank's moralised versions of Märchen, which the latter had turned into temperance tracts. In so doing, Dickens too remarked on the moral lessons that Märchen, left undistorted, could convey: 'gentleness and mercy', 'forbearance, courtesy, consideration for the poor and the aged, kind treatment of animals, the love of nature, abhorrence of tyranny and brute force'.[2] Cruikshank's Märchen, and other such works which were 'insinuating moral or scientific truths ... [so] that children are never safe', were also condemned by The Quarterly Review in 1860, on much the same grounds.[3]

In 1855, William Roscoe pleaded:

> As many ogres, dwarfs, fairies and enchanted princesses as you please, only don't mix them with Danes and the Corn-Laws; and let the lessons that fairy-stories naturally teach remain unencumbered with principles of general benevolence and the enforcement of necessary sanitary improvements.[4]

He defended Märchen from the old slurs of untruth to life and terrifying effect. And in 1868 Ruskin condemned the satire and over-sophistication of current works for children, condemning the 'moral fairy tale' retouched 'to suit particular tastes, or to inculcate favourite doctrines', in order to praise the merits of the 'favourite old stories'.[5]

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1. Quoted by Michael C. Kotzin, Dickens and the Fairy Tale, Bowling Green University Popular Press, Bowling Green, 1972, pp. 24-25.

2. Dickens, Charles, 'Frauds on the Fairies' (1853), A.P.G., op.cit., p. 111.

3. Anon., 'Children's Literature' (1860), A.P.G., op.cit., p. 315.

4. Roscoe, William Caldwell, 'Children's Fairy Tales, and George Cruikshank' (1854), A.P.G., op.cit., p. 125.

5. Ruskin, John, 'Fairy Stories' (1868), A.P.G., op.cit., pp. 127-130.

By the end of the century, indeed, Andrew Lang was condemning not retouched and moralised Märchen in contrast to their unretouched originals, but rather praising the latter in contrast to 'new fairy books', by which he meant fantasy novels in the manner of Alice. He disparaged the obtrusive morals of these in no uncertain manner.[1] Five years after, in 1897, J. Newby Hetherington also praised the indirectly conveyed ethical values of Märchen, their justice, 'courage, endurance, loyalty and truth'.[2]

By the end of the century, then, it was commonly recognised that not only had Märchen the values of amusement and of stretching the imagination, but that they had inherent in them a natural morality, which they inculcated without the use of obvious moralisings. From this point of view, they were favourably contrasted not only with distorted versions of themselves, but also with other original works for children.

Mrs Molesworth seemed to subscribe to the notion that Märchen were inherently moral and meaningful, and thus better than non-traditional works for children. In Olivia (1895), for instance, one of the child characters refers to Cinderella thus: '"The Story of Cinderella is a real fairy story," she said. "Not nursery nonsense. And it means much more than you think."'[3]

Since she shared the attitude of the age regarding the Märchen's subtle inculcation of inherent morality, it is to be expected that, when imitating them, in writing Kunstmärchen, Mrs Molesworth would attempt to use the stylised characters and events of the Märchen to a

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1. Lang, op.cit., pp. 133-136.

2. Newby Hetherington, op.cit., p. 152.

3. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, Olivia: A Story for Girls, Chambers, London etc., 1895, p. 61.

similar but conscious, subtly inculcated didactic end. 'The Story of Sunny' is didactic, and attempts to inculcate certain lessons, but it is important to distinguish between didactic literature that attempts to demonstrate a moral order and that which consists of simple prohibitions and exhortations.

I think that in 'The Story of Sunny' the potential for indirect and subtle instruction, which the Kunstmärchen presumably shared with the Märchen, was realised through allegory, and that the characters and events stand for various abstract notions in a way that is impossible in the Märchen. Since, as C.S. Lewis said, 'We ought not to proceed to allegorise any work, until we have plainly set out the reasons for regarding it as an allegory at all',[1] I should say that my assertion is supported by certain significant passages in Mrs Molesworth's work.

In The Oriel Window (1896), Miss Lilly the governess tells Ferdy the Kunstmärchen 'A Fairy House', on the values of perseverance:

> "What a funny story," said Ferdy; "it's nice, but isn't it more what you call a — I forget the word."
>
> "Allegory, do you mean?" said Miss Lilly. "Well yes, perhaps. Many fairy stories have a kind of meaning behind them, but I don't think this one is difficult to guess."[2]

In This and That (1899), old Mrs Lubin tells the children 'The Wise Princess', also a Kunstmärchen, about hard work. At the end she says:

> "... These old fairy stories often have meanings to find out that one does not see all at once."
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> "Yes," said Thattie, "I was thinking that," — for as you see he was older than Thissie.[3]

Mrs Molesworth praised Hans Andersen's 'The Real Princess', which is

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1. Lewis, C.S., 'On Criticism', in Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories, ed. Walter Hooper, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1966, p. 58.

2. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, The Oriel Window, Macmillan, London, 1896, p. 78.

3. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, This and That, Macmillan, London, 1899, p. 141.

based on a genuine Märchen, for its 'very true and delicate under-meaning'.[1] And in her own person, narrating the legends of St Blaise in Stories of the Saints for Children (1901), Mrs Molesworth remarked that 'We must of course look upon such stories as fairy tales or rather allegories'.[2] It is clear that for her, fairy tales, Märchen or Kunstmärchen, were associated with allegory.

'The Story of Sunny' was published in 1880. By this time there was almost a tradition of allegorical Kunstmärchen for children. Some of these are obvious enough. Catherine Sinclair's 'Nonsensical Story', for instance, in her Holiday House (1839), has Fairy Teach-all, Fairy Do-nothing, and Giant Snap-em-up contending for Master No-book. Others, such as Mrs Craik's full-length The Little Lame Prince (1875), are more subtle. The name of Mrs Craik's protagonist is Dolor, which has suggestive overtones, and the narrative voice tells the reader at various points that he should look for inner meanings in the narrative. Allegories were so popular that eight years after 'The Story of Sunny' was published, Charlotte Yonge cautioned that

> Too many allegories are not desirable, nor should they ever be pressed upon those who do not accept them too readily. To the imaginative, who are perhaps two-thirds of the people we deal with, they are an excellent and persuasive mode of teaching and influencing. The remaining third take them for fact, as people did in medieval times by the stories of St Christopher and St Margaret, and when the delusion is dispelled feel resentment, as if deceived; or else they look on the allegory as a tale meant to either cheat them into being instructed, or as an irreverent riddle.[3]

It is thus not unlikely that 'The Story of Sunny' could be regarded as

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1. 'Hans Christian Andersen', op.cit., p. 145.

2. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, Stories of the Saints for Children (1892), Longmans, Green, London, 1901, page no. illegible (mutilated copy).

3. Yonge, op.cit., p. 51.

an allegory, a 'paraphrase of a conscious content'.[1]

It is possible that Mrs Molesworth's combination of Märchen motifs into an allegorical Kunstmärchen was a result of German influence. Early nineteenth-century German writers wrote Kunstmärchen with 'a kaleidoscopic variety of fantasy motifs derived in part from traditional folktale material; and equally important, a multilayered meaning'.[2] The German Kunstmärchen may have provided a model for the integration of traditional folk tale motifs into conscious allegorical narrative. In the work of the Germans generally, there is no one-to-one correspondence between character and event and easily accessible abstract notions. Hence, many German Kunstmärchen simultaneously appear to invite and deny allegorical interpretation. Nevertheless, baffling though they undeniably are, German Kunstmärchen, like 'The Story of Sunny', appear to have some range of decodable 'meanings'.

Mrs Molesworth had read the German Romantics: Hoffmann's Nut-cracker may have influenced The Cuckoo Clock; she mentions de la Motte Fouque's Undine in her essay on Andersen; the applewoman who provides the 'way in' to The Magic Nuts seems reminiscent of the mysterious applewoman of the opening of Hoffmann's The Golden Pot. She lived in Germany for periods in the late 1870's and early 1880's, in Coburg and in a village near the Bavarian mountains on the Thuringian borders of Coburg. In A Christmas Child, 'The Story of Sunny' is said to be derived from a 'German reading-book', the 'gnomy story' of The Little Guest (1907) from a book of old German legends, and 'The Fairy Godmothers', interpolated into 'The Groaning Clock' (Fairies — of Sorts, 1908), from

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1. Jung, op.cit., p. 6, quoted also by Robert Scholes, The Fabulators, O.U.P., New York, 1967, p. 103.

2. Hines, op.cit., p. 16.

another such book. The Thuringian mountains and fir-forests provide the background for a large part of Mrs Molesworth's work: 'The Toymakers of Bergstein' (Summer Stories, 1882), Christmas Tree Land (1884), 'The Blue Dwarfs' (A Christmas Posy, 1888), 'Unexplained' (Four Ghost Stories, 1888), 'The Story of the Three Wishes' (An Enchanted Garden, 1892), 'Loni and her Brothers' (Stories in Illustration of the Lord's Prayer, 1897), The Magic Nuts (1899), 'Ask the Robins' (Fairies Afield, 1911), and others.

The Kunstmärchen of the German Romantics 'often appeared as symbolic kernels or germs within the larger context of a story',[1] where they played some special role. Novalis in The Apprentices at Sais and Henry of Ofterdingen, Clemens Brentano in Rhine Fairy Tales, Hoffmann in The Serapion Brothers, Wilhelm Hauff in his Fairy Tales — all these writers used the device of the interpolated Kunstmärchen. So did Mrs Molesworth. Her writings are peppered with them; and 'The Story of Sunny' is an example.

I will proceed to offer a series of allegorical interpretations of 'The Story of Sunny'. There are dangers in allegorical interpretation, as Lewis Carroll found when 'The Hunting of the Snark', in which he 'didn't mean anything but nonsense', was interpreted as an allegory 'on the search for happiness', an interpretation which he was, in after years, ruefully to accept.[2] I have tried to make my interpretations germane to what we may plausibly assume to be Mrs Molesworth's attitudes and beliefs, bearing in mind that 'there are different meanings and different kinds of meaning in any richly imagined allegory'.[3]

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1. Bleiler, E.F., 'Introduction', The Best Tales of Hoffmann, Dover, New York, 1967, p. xx.

2. Relevant letters by Lewis Carroll on the 'allegory' and meanings in 'The Hunting of the Snark', in The Annotated Snark (1962), ed. Martin Gardner, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973, pp. 21-22.

3. Scholes, op.cit., p. 150.

I will then consider the relation between 'The Story of Sunny' and the fictional context of its frame from the point of view of both Mrs Molesworth's particular moral intention and from that of her narrative art.

B. MORAL INTENTIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS: AS REVEALED BY ALLEGORICAL EXEGESIS

a. Social Allegory

I think that on one level 'The Story of Sunny' is an allegory of the relationship between the rich and the poor, property-owners and workers. Mrs Molesworth had seen poverty in Thuringia — 'The Toymakers', 'Unexplained' and 'Loni' compassionately remark upon the contrast between the neat exteriors of the peasants' cottages and the poverty within. Mrs Molesworth also lived in Cheshire, just after her marriage, and her horror at rural conditions is expressed through the mouths of her 'radical' characters in such novels as Cicely: A Story of Three Years (1874) or Meg Langholme, or The Day After Tomorrow (1897). One of the chief concerns in The Oriel Window (1896), a novel for children, is social work for the poor villagers. However, one of the most striking recurrent motifs in her work is not rural poverty, but the dirty industrial city and its ill effects on the inhabitants. This too can be traced to her own experience.

Mrs Molesworth lived in Manchester for the greater part of her early life, from the ages of two till twenty-two. From the house in which the family lived there could be seen the slums of Manchester, and this obviously made a great impression on the young Miss Stewart as she was then. To her, Manchester was 'Smokytown', the name of the city in which lives Louisa, heroine of 'The Reel Fairies'. In Little Miss Peggy

(1887), the heroine longs to escape the city and vainly searches for the open countryside. She finds only a smoke-blackened meadow. Ruth Robertson tells me that the surroundings of Peggy's home, with the slums at the back, correspond exactly with that of the Stewart household,[1] and it seems probable that Peggy's longings are a reflection of Louisa Stewart's, just as Louisa's were in 'The Reel Fairies'.

However, as Mrs Molesworth came from a fairly wealthy, educated family, she would have had more than merely personal impressions of the Manchester slums to go upon. As a young girl in the 1850's and 60's, she would have known the great 'industrial' novels of the period, especially as she was a pupil of Rev. Gaskell, Mrs Gaskell's husband.[2] The name 'Smokytown' itself seems to derive from the 'Coketown' of Dickens's Hard Times. In other words, she was not alone in her perception of the industrial slums, for major novelists had seen them and represented them in the same way. Industrial novels flourished during the mid-century, and it is perhaps indicative of the essentially 'conservative' nature of children's literature that a concern or theme which filtered through to it, continued to be drawn upon after it had been virtually played out in adult novels.

Again and again, through the forty-odd years of her writing career, Mrs Molesworth referred in her novels for children to the ugly and oppressive industrial city. Tony, the hero of Farthings (1892), is brought up in Liverpool, and is very pale and very thin as a result. The country house of his guardian is the cure: 'The sunshine and the trees ... the sweet country air ... did wonders' for him. In one of Mrs Molesworth's most famous books, The Carved Lions (1895), Geraldine

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1. Robertson, Ruth, in a letter dated April 1978.

2. Tooley, op.cit., pp. 1-2; Green, 'Mrs Molesworth', op.cit., pp. 104-105.

lives in the ugly manufacturing town of Great Mexington. Her nursemaid describes to her how gradually the encroaching city had swallowed up the pretty villages and Geraldine admits that the country was 'almost the same as fairyland to me'. In The Oriel Window (1896), Ferdy, who lives in the country, thinks of unhappiness in these terms:

> "I suppose there are some people who are really unhappy — poor people who live in ugly dirty towns perhaps," and his thoughts strayed to a day last year when he had driven with his father through the grim-looking streets of a mining village...."

and he devotes his life to bringing beauty into the ugliness.[1] In her story 'The Beacon on the Hill' (included in This and That, 1899) Nurse describes her village thus:

> "It wasn't a very pretty village though, there were two or three big houses with high chimneys, out of which for many hours of the day smoke came pouring",

and

> "it isn't only flames that come from those great furnaces, but smoke which rises up through the chimneys and blackens the air, and even the trees and the grass in those places look dark and dirty — smoke-begrimed, they call it"

and, with her brother, she longs for a sight of the sea.[2] In one of Mrs Molesworth's last books, The Story of a Year (1910), we come across the same loathing of the overcrowded city and the same longing for the country: Fulvia and her mother feel impelled to walk from Northborough the city to the village of Daisyfield, in quest of a temporary escape. There are many other references of this sort in Mrs Molesworth's work.

'The Story of Sunny' is set against the background of a forest and a mountain, but this is not an idyllic pastoral background, for its inhabitants are deprived of light:

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1. The Oriel Window, op.cit., p. 62.

2. This and That, op.cit., p. 54.

> "They all had a pale sad look, something like the look I have heard papa say the poor people in some parts of England have — the people in those parts where they work so awfully hard in dark smoky towns and never see the sun, or the green fields, or anything fresh and pretty. Of course the forest people were not so badly off as that — for their work any way was in the open air, and the forest was clean — not like dirty factories, even though it was so dark."[1]

Even though it is said that the forest people are better off than the industrial working classes, the connection has been made. The points of similarity between the forest and the industrial city are stressed: 'dark', 'gloomy', 'shade', and 'chill' are recurrent words.

These people are hard-worked charcoal burners, peasants of a sort, but the association of their occupation with smoke links them further with the industrial workers. They are hard-worked: '"it was difficult to gain enough to live on"' (p. 69). Their living conditions are bad, for in the forest there was not '"much room for cottages and houses"' (p. 69). Like the industrial workers '"It was the want of sunshine that was their worst trouble'" (p. 70), and as a result they have '"a pale sad look"' (p. 69), a'" white, dull, half-frightened look"' (p. 70) and the children are '"pale and sad and crushed-looking like their parents"' (p. 73). They live their lives in '"a dull, sad way"' (p. 71), the children '"didn't know how to laugh or play"' (p. 72), they do not visit (p. 69), and they seldom speak to each other (p. 71). They have been sapped of initiative, '"too poor and too hard-worked to move away to another country or to do anything but just go through each day as it came"' (p. 71).

The cause of the unhappy condition of the charcoal burners is the powerful property-owner, the giant. He owns the mountain that contains

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1. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, A Christmas Child (1880), Macmillan, London, 1906, pp. 69-70. All references to the novel are hereafter embodied in the text of this chapter. The edition with which I have worked, with a dark blue patterned cover, is bibliographically interesting. In contrast to both the first and the pale blue-chequered covered 1894 editions, it bears The Christmas Child on its cover, and A Christmas Child on the title-page. The other editions have A Christmas Child on both.

within it the way into the sunshine, and he has shut it up (p. 71). The giant may stand for the factory-owner, responsible for the condition of the urban worker, but he has nothing to do with the occupation of the charcoal burners. He does not buy their charcoal, and there is no 'nexus' established. Mrs Molesworth may have meant the giant as a composite figure, standing simultaneously for the factory-owner and the rich landowner. The latter is particularly appropriate since the giant's malignity stems from his

> "... quarrel with the forest people. He wanted them to let their little boys and girls, or some of them, come to him to be his servants, but they wouldn't, and he was so angry that he shut up the door."
>
> (p. 72)

The demand for servants seems as appropriate to a landowner as to a factory-owner, though of course the demand for servants may also be seen as a demand for child labour. Neither the equation between giant and factory-owner or landowner, nor the equation between charcoal burners and factory workers or peasants should be pushed too far, as long as it is understood that the giant stands for the rich and the charcoal burners for the poor.

The giant is pictured as a '"great and powerful"' (p. 71), isolated figure (pp. 71, 73). In the first part of the Kunstmärchen, he is the epitome of a sadistic selfishness which results not from ignorance but from understanding of the situation, and he gloats over the misfortunes he causes as his revenge on the poor:

> "Sometimes he used to come out at a hole in the top [of the mountain] ... and stay up there, looking about him, staring at the black forest down at his feet, and smiling grimly to himself at the thought of how dark and dull it must be for the people who lived in it. For he was not a kind giant at all."
>
> (p. 71)

> "... whenever he came out at the top of the mountain to take some air, he used to look down at the forest and think how dull and miserable they must be there."
>
> (p. 72)

The solution to the problem existing between the giant and the charcoal burners, the powerful and the powerless, is that since they need sunshine and he demands service, he must have it. Sunny, a little girl, determines to go to the giant and melt his heart (p. 80). He demands her service, she willingly accedes (p. 87), and he grudgingly grants the people access to the sunshine (p. 88). He grows progressively kinder, '"quite warm and good-natured"' (p. 89), but continues to exact Sunny's services till she grows so tired that she '"said to herself that she was going to die"' (p. 90). Then the giant grows '"sad and sorry"' (p. 90), the mountain melts away (p. 91), and the formerly cruel giant becomes a shade-giving '"soft, gray cloud"' (p. 92).

In terms of the allegory, Mrs Molesworth's solution is that the powerless poor, 'labour', must submit to the powerful rich, 'capital', which at first grudgingly allows them a better way of life. Then, when the former can go on no more, the latter will repent. The cloud shields the charcoal burners just as money shields people. When the barrier between rich and poor breaks down, happiness can be achieved. The solution is not defiance, but heaping coals of fire.

Mrs Molesworth was evidently no social reformer. Her bias is seen in such novels as the historical The Little Old Portrait (1884) in which the French Revolution is presented from the point of view of a 'good' noble family, or Robin Redbreast: A Story for Girls (1898) in which the narrative voice talks about Barmettle, with its

> bright and happy homes, as well as its thousands of hard, if not overworked, pale-faced artisans, men and women, of many grades and classes.
>
> And the sun can shine there sometimes; and not so many miles from the very centre of the town, you can escape from the heavy pall of the smoke-filled air, into fresh and picturesque country, whose beauties, to my thinking, strike one all the more vividly from the force of contrast with all the ugliness and griminess which you cannot forget are so near.[1]

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1. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, Robin Redbreast: A Story for Girls, Chambers, London etc., 1892, p. 254.

This narrative voice also asserts that 'I don't think any harm came from the division of classes',[1] and presents an unconvincing picture of a 'good' factory-owner, loved by all his workers who weep at his death, who spends more than he needs in making working conditions safe.[2]

Mrs Molesworth obviously felt badly for the conditions of the powerless poor, and the urban squalor affected her sensibilities, but it is equally obvious that she worked out no social theory or solution. In 'The Story of Sunny', she paints the lurid soapbox picture of the powerful selfish property owner, but gives no indication that she is aware that the problem lies not in a particular human character, but in a social system. It is not that powerful property owners will not share, but that they cannot; when they penalise those who will not work, the powerless, it is the system in operation.

But 'The Story of Sunny' is saved from puerility and obvious naíveté precisely because it is an allegorical Kunstmärchen, not a realistic fictional account of the same sort of social problems which Dickens treated in Hard Times, in terms of Bounderby and Stephen Blackpool. Works of fantasy seem to be the way in which such problems could be treated in a manner suitable for children. And even in the great social novels of, say, Mrs Gaskell and Dickens, 'the diagnosis and elucidation of social ills is more often than not more aesthetically successful than the corresponding remedy because the novel, by its very nature, is tied to a phenomenal world which it attempts to describe, rather than to an ideal world which it might hope could exist'.[3] Because 'The Story of Sunny' is an allegorical Kunstmärchen, Mrs Molesworth has certain

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1. Ibid., p. 9.

2. Ibid., pp. 262-262.

3. Mundhenk, Rosemary Karmelich, Another World: the Mode of Fantasy in the Fiction of Selected Nineteenth Century Writers, U.C.L.A. Ph.D. thesis, 1972, p. 3.

advantages in presenting a complex issue. Since it is never stated that the charcoal burners, Sunny, and the giant are the poor and the rich, these categories need to be derived from outside the narrative, the Kunstmärchen can be taken 'straight', as it were, and the allegory disregarded. Because of the stylised, flat characterisation which the Kunstmärchen inherits from the Märchen, Mrs Molesworth did not need to attempt to fulfil the demands of realism, with the corresponding dangers of 'lack of felt life' or of having missed the point. Because the Kunstmärchen employs fantasy, 'The Story of Sunny' could economically and acceptably convey an implausible change of heart. Even in A Christmas Carol, a fantasy novelette, the conversion of the property owner Scrooge is rather embarrassing since Dickens has employed the realistic devices of characterisation proper to the short story. In 'The Story of Sunny', a Kunstmärchen, the giant's change of heart can be conveyed by the emblematic device of metamorphosis which is acceptable here as it is in the Märchen. Lastly, since 'The Story of Sunny' works at a number of levels, a shift of focus from the allegory of rich and poor at the end serves to camouflage the naïveté of the solution which seems to be offered.

b. Mythical Allegory: the Saviour

On another level, I think 'The Story of Sunny' is an allegory of the myth of divine redemption by sacrifice: following the pattern of the Fall of Man, the work of the Saviour, and the condition of Man after the Fall. The comment of Charlotte Yonge quoted earlier, and Mrs Craik's Little Lame Prince would indicate that for Victorian writers for children, allegories tended to have a religious bias, but I know of no other Kunstmärchen for children that can be read in a similar way.

Before the charcoal burners were reduced to misery

> "it had not always been so in the sunless forest .... There had, once upon a time, been a way into the sunshine .... in those days they didn't live in the forest, they only went there for their work, and on Sundays and holidays they were all happy and merry together, and the little children grew up rosy and bright ....".
>
> (pp. 71-72)

In this state corresponding to the prelapsarian pastoral Eden, the people had direct access to what Sunny's grandfather calls the 'blessed sun' (p. 79). The sun is the giver of life, a common enough metaphor for divinity. Christ is called the Sun of Righteousness. Though Mrs Molesworth would not have believed the now commonly held notion that Christ is only another sun-god, the connection between the sun and the Divine was an easily available one.[1] The charcoal burners are in direct communion with God.

After the Fall, humanity was cut off from this direct communion by Sin and the Devil, here represented by the giant in his mountain. The giant is a traditional symbol for evil in religious allegories: Orgoglio (Worldly Pride) in The Faerie Queene Book I or Giant Despair in The Pilgrim's Progress.

Like Fallen Man, the charcoal burners retain only a dim recollection of their former blessed state:

> [They live miserably, for] "their fathers had done so before them, and there was no help for it, they thought."
>
> (p. 71)

> "... hardly any of the people knew it had ever been different."
>
> (p. 71)

> "But that was so long ago now that the people had almost forgotten about it ... so that the real history of their troubles was forgotten by them but not by the giant ...."
>
> (p. 72)

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1. See James Frazer, The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion Abridged edition (1922), Macmillan, London, 1974, pp. 471-476; Hugo Rahner, 'Das Christliche Mysterium von Sonne und Mond', Eranos Jahrbuch, 1944, pp. 306-404; E.O. James, The Ancient Gods, Weidenfield and Nicholson, London, 1960, and the works of Franz Cumont on Mithraism.

> "They seemed to have forgotten that he was the cause of their sad, gloomy lives, and indeed I am not sure that any except some very old people really knew."
> (p. 73)

Sunny stands for the divine Saviour, 'of one substance with the Father'.

> "I don't know what her real name was; ... but the name she got to have among the forest people was Sunshine ...."
> (pp. 73-74)

> "... it seemed as if the sunshine was <u>in</u> her somehow, and that nothing could send it away."
> (p. 74)

She carries the divine light with her.

> "Sunny's bright head [was] always floating about, and her merry voice sounding like a bird's."
> (p. 78)

> [She walks in the forest with] "her bright little head shining in the darkness almost as if the sun was lighting it up."
> (p. 82)

She is physically 'bright-haired and bright-eyed and rosy-cheeked' (p. 73) and bright-natured: a 'merry, happy creature' (p. 73). She can find a sunlit spot in the forest when nobody else can (p. 79).

There tends to be something extraordinary about the Saviour's birth.

> "The reason that [Sunny] was so different was partly that she hadn't been born in the forest. Her father ... had gone away ... to another country, and there he married a bright-haired, pretty girl."
> (p. 74)

Both Sunny's parents died, and she was brought up by her grandparents. As an orphan, she is child of the community in general, and as such the embodiment of some aspect of the community. Like Christ, Sunny has two sets of parent-figures. Like Him too, she is not well born or powerful in the eyes of the world, for her grandparents are 'almost the poorest of all in the forest' (p. 73). In the Christian tradition, the family into which Christ was born had been especially marked out two generations previously, in St Ann and St. Joachim. Sunny's grandparents partake of

their roles. They have some measure of her qualities of sacrifice and love, saying:

> "'We have not very many years to live. It would be very wrong of us to lose the chance of life and happiness for all the poor forest people just to keep our bit of sunshine for ourselves.' And so they let her go, for they were good old people."
>
> (p. 81)

Sunny can remember another, happier state of things, associated with her mother's country where the people were happy (p. 79). She is directed on her mission to the giant by a supernatural agency, for as she tells her grandparents,

> "'... I had a strange dream. I dreamt that a beautiful lady stood beside me and said, "Go, Sunny, and have no fear. The giant will not harm you."'"
>
> (p. 80)

Christ was directed by His Divine parent, who is different in kind from those around Him. If the lady in the dream is Sunny's mother, of a different sort from the forest people, the parallel is obvious. And before she sets out on her mission, her head is lit up by a ray of sunshine which has found its way into the forest. Her grandparents recognise this as a magic sign (p. 81). Moses, another type of Christ, had his head lit up in this manner, and here the divine sign which comes before Sunny's work begins, may be compared to the dove that lighted on Christ's head after His baptism, or to a halo.

Like Christ's, Sunny's role is marked out for her: '"she had to go and so she did'"(p. 81). Before she sets on her journey we are told that her grandfather,'"one of the few remaining old people who knew the reason for their misfortunes"'(p. 79), remembers only the reason for the people's misery, and the way to the passage in the mountain (p. 82). At various stages of Sunny's quest, however, we realise that she is following a laid-out pattern, and that she knows what will happen:

> [When she reaches the door in the mountain]"she found a little silver knob — her grandfather had told her about it..."
>
> (p. 83)

> "... she heard a clear tinkling bell. That was just what her grandfather had told her she would hear...."
> (pp. 83-84)

Her grandfather also knows that she will be asked if she has come to stay (p. 84). And finally, Sunny'"had settled with her grandfather that if she didn't come straight back, he would send some of the people to watch for the door being opened"'(p. 88). It appears now that Sunny's grandfather is aware not only of the existence of the giant and the way to the passage, but of all the stages of Sunny's ordeal, that there is a tradition about it, in fact. There is no mention of anyone approaching the giant before; on the contrary the fact that the people have forgotten about him is emphasised. But in order to make clear the ordained pattern of Sunny's deed, Mrs Molesworth introduced a slight inconsistency.

Now follow various events after the familiar pattern of ransom, vicarious suffering, death, and resurrection.

It is clear that Sunny offers herself as a ransom in return for what the people enjoyed before the giant and the mountain were obstacles. The giant asks Sunny, '"Have you come to stay?"' and his next question is, '"At what price?"' Her answer is '"Sunshine for the forest"' (p. 84). Three times she asks the giant '"Will you unfasten the door, good Mr Giant ...?"' (p. 87) and she will not give herself to him till he accedes. '"Have you opened the door?"', she says before she will go to him, '"I can't come till you've opened the door"' (p. 88). The giant tries to cheat her. He wants her, without wanting to give anything in return. He muses '"It would be no good cutting it (her hair) off — the sunshine would go out of it"', he tries to evade committing himself: '"I'll consider about it"', '"Yes, I'll open the door if you'll go and bathe your hair well"', '"Come down and I'll tell you"' (pp. 87-88). Since she will not be swerved from her path, he finally

assents.

Sunny serves the giant, and suffers in so doing. She grows thin and white: '"It was worse than the forest"'(p. 89). Like Christ, she has taken upon herself the sins of her world and is suffering vicariously for it.

Christ died for his people. For Sunny,

> "one morning came when ... her strength went away and she seemed to get half asleep, and she said to herself that she was going to die, and she did not know anything more."
> (p. 90)

It is a virtual death. And just as death could not hold Christ, it cannot hold Sunny. She wakes to see that

> "It was just as if the mountain had melted away. And just fancy, that was what had happened."
> (p. 91)

Sin and the devil were overcome in Christ's overcoming death; the mountain and the giant are rendered harmless by Sunny's overcoming of death as well.

After the mountain and the giant disappear, the condition of the people is happier than before, which ties in with the idea of a felix culpa. Now, there are

> "smiling green fields and orchards and cottages filled with flowers, just the sort of country her grandfather had told her he remembered when he was a child on the other side of the great hill .... And Sunny and all the forest people lived all their lives as happy as could be — they were happier even than in the old days ... the sunshine now found its way by all the chinks and crannies among the branches into the very forest itself."
> (p. 91)

The children shout and laugh (p. 89), and today

> "... the people of that country are noted for their healthy happy faces, and the little children for their rosy cheeks and golden hair."
> (p. 92)

As with the previous level of allegory, it is evident that the fact that 'The Story of Sunny' is an allegorical Kunstmärchen has certain advantages. To begin with, the myth of the Saviour can be

allegorised without exact correspondence between the myth and the allegory.

Most strikingly, since Sunny is a type of Christ, not Christ himself, it is admissible that she be female. Nancy Mann, talking of George MacDonald's anima figures, remarks that

> The use of a female god-substitute should shock no reader of nineteenth century literature, which often depicts women as being naturally more "spiritual" and closer to God than men. The qualities of character which the Victorians felt to be distinctively feminine (purity, compassion, etc.) were also most closely associated with Christ and Victorian depictions of Christ were often effeminate or androgynous.[1]

According to Carol Christ, many of the Victorian male writers were unsatisfied with what was seen as the male role, and they signalled 'a retreat from the ideal of the man in action and an admiration for traditionally female virtues'.[2] Mrs Molesworth herself tends to depict her gentle boy heroes as specifically effeminate. Utie, the only character in her Little Mother Bunch (1890) who sees things as they are, is 'a quiet gentle-mannered boy. He had before now been considered "soft" and he knew it'.[3] Jack, the hero of The Girls and I (1892) admits quite frankly that his sisters are 'boy-ey' girls and that he himself is 'the other way'. Moore in The Grim House (1899) is said to be like a girl in his demonstrative ways as well as in his looks. If Christ and 'good' men were marked out by what the Victorians saw as admirable, but 'feminine' qualities, it is quite in order that Mrs Molesworth should have a type of Christ as a little girl, her parentage marked out as singular in the female line, and the guiding supernatural agency as female as well.

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1. Mann, op.cit., p. 143.

2. Christ, op.cit., p. 160.

3. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, Little Mother Bunch, Cassell, London, 1890, p. 13.

Again, since at this level of allegory Mrs Molesworth concentrates on a saviour figure, the fact the charcoal burners fell to a state of misery through no fault of their own need not be made too much of. The giant who stands for the forces of evil, may also be seen as part of humanity as well. He has cut himself off from all relationships and re-establishes a relationship with the rest of the world by fondling Sunny's hair with growing affection (pp. 86-87, 89-90). A parallel is indicated to the re-establishment of a renewed harmony in humanity itself, also part of the Christian myth, which embraces all peoples.

Since the onus of being aware of the allegory, interpreting it and drawing correspondences, rests with the reader, it may be said that Mrs Molesworth has it all ways at once, and that this is part of what the allegorical Kunstmärchen offers. The other striking advantage that it offers is of course a stock of striking, stylised and non-realistic objects and events, including fantasy, which the writer may invest with a desired meaning. The particular meaning is generated by the combination of these objects and events, and in 'The Story of Sunny' Mrs Molesworth has combined them so as to give a mythical dimension to a simple narrative.

c. Stylised Representation: childhood in action

On a third level, 'The Story of Sunny' can be read, not as an allegory exactly, but as a stylised representation of a particular conventional view of childhood. According to this, the child is marked out by the ability to love, and to communicate this love to the adult, inspiring it in him, thereby saving him from such fates as isolation, alienation or the inability to form relationships. That is, contact with the child has a salutary effect on the adult. Interestingly, in fictional embodiments of this view, the child may be of any sex, but the adult is almost invariably an old man.

The development of these fictional embodiments is not clear, but it is certain that it derives from an attitude that tends to repudiate Original Sin. In 1906, in a sound and rational essay, a certain Eveline C. Godley categorised the fictional child of nineteenth century children's literature into three broad types, more or less chronologically consecutive. She said

> The models thus held up to the youth of the last hundred years may be divided, roughly, into three classes. First we are shown, the child instructed. However blameless the Georgian infant might be, the papa and mamma were always wiser and better. Secondly we have the child as reformer; a very terrible variety, chiefly imported from America. Last of all comes the child as a psychological study; considered from an interested, but perfectly irresponsible point of view, as a being complete in itself, not, as it has been said, "an adult in the making".[1]

It is the second of these classes, which is placed in the mid-century, that Sunny represents. It should be emphasised that the child in this class is a saviour only in a very general sense, and that this reading of 'The Story of Sunny' is not identical to the previous one. According to Eveline Godley, the genesis of this child lies in early nineteenth century evangelical fiction for children. She cites the case of Mrs Sherwood's Little Henrie, who appears in an interpolated story in The Fairchild Family. She calls him a 'ministering child'. However, Mrs Sherwood did indeed subscribe to the doctrine of Original Sin, and it is not love which Henrie and his evangelical brothers and sisters communicate to misguided adults, but right doctrine. Eveline Godley's hint is useful, though, because it suggests a possible point of origin: the martyrologies, which told of the holy and innocent lives and noble deaths of any number of child saints, who often converted their hardened persecutors by their extraordinary patience in suffering, their unblemished natures, and their love for all humanity.

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1. Godley, op.cit., p. 94.

Eveline Godley cites examples of this child in two mid-Victorian works for adults: Dombey and Son (1848) and Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852), referring, presumably to Florence Dombey and Little Eva. Since she disapproves of the priggishness of this child figure as a model for real children, she draws the familiar distinction between books for and about children, these being of the latter class. Her mention of Dickens is again suggestive. Of all the major mid-Victorian novelists, Dickens has an interesting recurrent image: that of the innocent loving child in contact with and in some way affecting the old man for the better — Fagin and Oliver Twist (1838), Nell and her grandfather (1841), Scrooge and Tiny Tim (1843), Dombey and Florence and Little Paul (1848), Riah and Jenny Wren (1864). In discussing this image of the old man and the child, Pattison has what is to my mind a somewhat idiosyncratic theological interpretation. He connects the old man with St Paul's notion of the vetus homo, connected with the old dispensation of the Jews, and the child with the new dispensation.[1] This seems to be rather a fanciful explanation of the origin of this child figure.

After mentioning Dickens, Eveline Godley goes on to assert that the ministering child took hold of the American rather than the English imagination, citing examples such as Martha Finley's Elsie Dinsmore series, and some of the novels of the English Jewess Grace Aguilar, laying perhaps too much stress on the American purview of this child figure. Hers is an interesting and helpful, though incomplete view.

In 1975, Gillian Avery, tracing the changes in fictional children in English children's literature, isolates the particular child figure in two areas. In her study of 'The evangelical child 1818-1880', she mentions mid-Victorian fictional children on the lines of Mary Louisa Charlesworth's Ministering Children (1854) which gave a new phrase to

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1. Pattison, op.cit., p. 81, see also pp. 81-93, 96-107.

the language, and The Children's Friend (1881), and mentions how these children led reprobate adults away from such sins as drunkenness.[1] In her study of 'The Innocents 1880-1930' Gillian Avery isolates one variety of 'innocent' in terms strikingly appropriate to a discussion of 'The Story of Sunny':

> ... the portrayal of the little sunshines who bring light and warmth to aging, ice-bound hearts.[2]

She mentions Mrs Hodgson Burnett's Editha of Editha's Burglar (c. 1881), Little Lord Fauntleroy (1886), and Little St Elizabeth (1890) as examples of this late-Victorian manifestation of the ministering child. Most striking of course is Little Lord Fauntleroy, with his golden hair and velvet suit, who melts the heart of crusty old men such as his grandfather, the Earl of Dorincourt. Gillian Avery takes the history of this child figure into the 1900's with the writings of Amy le Feuvre.

Gillian Avery goes no further than the 1900's, but the figure did persist, albeit in modified form. Mrs Hodgson Burnett was parodied again and again. F. Anstey parodied Editha's Burglar in his recitation 'Burglar Bill', E. Nesbit parodied it in 'The Cats, the Cow and the Burglar' episode of The Phoenix and the Carpet (1904), and in the 1930's and 40's, Evadne Price (Helen Zenna Smith) drew upon it several times in her Jane books. Evadne Price also mocked the Little Lord Fauntleroy figure in one of her stories. But however much the figure was parodied, and even though E. Nesbit's own Bastables refer contemptuously to Ministering Children (as they do in the second chapter of The Wouldbegoods, 1901), they themselves are very much in the same tradition. The very climax of The Treasure Seekers (1899), in fact, depends upon the use of this conventional view of childhood: the

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1. Avery, Childhood's Pattern, op.cit., pp. 112-115.

2. Ibid., p. 147.

Bastables restore the fallen fortunes of their house by melting the heart of their obdurate Indian uncle who refuses to help their father financially. It is their communication of love to him that makes him relent. And for all Evadne Price's parodying, when Jane is faced with very much of a Little Lord Fauntleroy situation, she is indeed able to draw out the latent love and affection that reside in the great-aunt of her friend Adam, or the 'masculine' maiden lady Honoria. This figure of the 'converting', 'ministering' child who affects the lives of adults for the better by its characteristic qualities of love and innocence and beauty lived on at least till the Second World War.

A comparison between 'The Story of Sunny' and examples of a realistic fictional embodiment of this view of childhood will illuminate the particular qualities of the Kunstmärchen. Of course, it is apparent that the Kunstmärchen genre offered Mrs Molesworth the opportunity to turn the clichéd figure of speech about a 'sunny' natured child into something more than a figure of speech, into a meaningful allegorical emblem. She herself used the cliché fairly often. Rosy, a heroine of one of her short stories, is a child before whom

> quarrels and ill humour melted away ... the sunshine seemed always to rest on her head, and sorrows and troubles never brought a cross or impatient word to her gentle lips.[1]

The grandfather of another child, Gwen, tells her when she arrives in London that

> he felt sure she had privately brought away a bottleful of country sunshine and uncorked it on her arrival.[2]

'Sunny' is a cliché for any sweet and self-sacrificing girl, such as the heroine of Rosa Nouchette Carey's Aunt Diana (1888), who actually

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1. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, Twelve Tiny Tales, S.P.C.K., London, 1890, p. 29.

2. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, 'The Mysterious Guide', The Story of a Spring Morning (1890), Chambers, London etc., n.d., p. 252.

has it as a nickname. But none of these 'sunny' girls is in any way memorable, and the cliché is in no way revivified as it is in 'The Story of Sunny'.

The most useful novel for the purposes of comparison with 'The Story of Sunny' is George Eliot's Silas Marner (1860). The Methodist weaver who has lost his faith is no ogre-figure, nor a conventional miser. He is presented as a man with a dim and bewildered apprehension of the world. Nevertheless it is clear that he is in some way hardened. He is seen by the villagers around him as a mysterious figure, fearful, in some way to be propitiated. The gold that he gradually accumulates takes the place of any real human contact. He loses his gold, and it is clear that Eppie, the mysterious foundling, takes the place of it. Eppie reconciles him to humanity, and the metaphor of warming is used very significantly:

> ... it seemed as if there were gold on the floor in front of the hearth. Gold! — his own gold — brought back to him as mysteriously as it had been taken away! ... The heap of gold seemed to glow and get larger beneath his agitated gaze. He leaned forward at last, and stretched forth his hand; but instead of the hard coin with the familiar resisting outline, his fingers encountered soft, warm curls .... it was a sleeping child — a round fair thing, with soft yellow rings all over its head.[1]

> ... the child created fresh and fresh links between his life and the lives from which he had hitherto shrunk continually into narrower isolation. Unlike the gold ... Eppie was a creature of endless claims and ever-growing desires, seeking and loving sunshine ... stirring the human kindness in all eyes ....[she]made him look for images of that time in the ties and charities that bound together the families of his neighbours ... Eppie called him away from his weaving, and made him think all its pauses a holiday, reawakening his senses with her fresh life, even to the old winter flies that came crawling forth in the early spring sunshine, and warming him into joy because she had joy.[2]

Silas is no longer regarded as mysterious or fearful, he becomes a kindly

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1. Eliot, George, Silas Marner (1860), New American Library, New York etc., 1960, p. 115.

2. Ibid., p. 130.

and benevolent figure in the eyes of the villagers. Eppie is found at Christmas, and is expressly compared to an angel, but she is no immortal sprite, as is made clear by the plot, but merely the offspring of an unblessed union. Almost every time she is mentioned, so is her warm, soft golden hair.[1]

Even though George Eliot said that Silas Marner occurred to her as a 'sort of legendary tale', and that it was more suitable to 'metrical rather than to prose fiction',[2] and even though her characterisation tends towards the flat, Silas Marner is a novel, a realistic piece of prose fiction in which Eppie is the embodiment of a particular view of the child as loving 'converter', 'reformer', or 'minister'.

'The Story of Sunny' is, from one point of view, almost an alternative version of very much the same sort of occurrence as that in Silas Marner, using differing conventions. The giant may be seen as the hardened, loveless old man, and Sunny as the loving child, who changes him. The giant too lives 'quite alone' (p. 71), cut off from all contact with the world, with nothing but his property to sustain him. Sunny brings him sunshine and warmth, literally, in her hair. The giant immerses his hand in her golden hair which 'catches' and carries the warmth of the sun in it (pp. 86, 87, 88). Because the allegorical Kunstmärchen allows Mrs Molesworth to use the depiction of the suspension of physical law, a metaphor is made concrete. Sunny's hair literally warms the giant, and her loving presence metaphorically warms him too: when his hands 'were quite warm ... he grew quite pleased and good-natured' (p. 69). The emphasis on the warmth that the child Eppie has inherent in her, and the emphasis on her golden curls are strikingly paralleled in 'The Story of Sunny'. But because of the conventions of the

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1. Ibid., pp. 115, 126, 141, 144, 149.

2. Ibid., p. 187.

Kunstmärchen, the import of the figure of 'warming' the adult into renewed ability to form relationships is conveyed economically and vividly by the use of fantasy. And Sunny does not need to be compared to an angel, because the stylised nature of the work points to the religious or mythic overtones of her actions, and she is implied to be Christ-like.

In the same way, the equivalent of Silas's re-establishing of relationships, and his losing his fearful and mysterious aura is conveyed by Mrs Molesworth through fantasy: the giant metamorphoses into a 'soft gray cloud', and the children of the forest, now no longer afraid of him,

> "used to laugh when they saw the cloud, and say to each other, 'See, there is the giant warming his hands.' But Sunny would say softly in a whisper, 'Thank you, Mr. Giant.'"
>
> (p. 92)

The elaborations of plot that are required by the novel, the account of Eppie's finding, her frolics in 'de toal-hole', the revelation of her parentage, her selfless decision to stay with her foster-father, all these have correspondences in 'The Story of Sunny' in fantasy objects (the cruel giant) and fantasy events (Sunny's ability to carry warmth in her hair, the metamorphosis of the giant to signal his change of heart). The novel relies on detail and non-violation of probability, the Kunstmärchen is far more abstract, far less detailed, and uses the exact opposite of probability to convey much the same view of the effects of the contact with a particular kind of child figure.

In order to allow for the giant's final change of heart at the end of 'The Story of Sunny', Mrs Molesworth employs a rhetorical technique by which the gloating, selfish evil figure who demanded the services of little children can be seen as also in some way pathetic.

At the beginning, along with the descriptions of the giant's gloating,

> "... he was very unkind, but still I think you would have been rather sorry for him too. He was old and all alone, and of course nobody loved him."
>
> (pp. 72-73)

When Sunny actually sees him, even his servants have left him (p. 86), and

> "... in one corner a very old, grim-looking man was sitting. He had a very long beard, but he didn't look so awfully big as Sunny had expected, for she knew he must be the giant. He was sitting quite still, and it seemed to Sunny that he was shivering. Any way he looked very old and very lonely and sad, and instead of feeling frightened of him the little girl felt very sorry for him."
>
> (p. 85)

He is polite, and bows to her (p. 85), 'rather to her surprise'. This is a far cry from what one would expect a gloating figure of evil to be. At this point, his reason for depriving the forest people of sunshine is still presented as revenge or vindictiveness, but also as petulance:

> "'Why should they have sunshine? I can't get it myself, since I'm too old to get up to the top there. Sunshine indeed!'"
>
> (p. 86)

He calls Sunny a 'tiresome child' (p. 87), and grumbles as he opens the door to let the forest people through (p. 88). From now on phrases like 'poor old hands' (p. 89) and 'old face' (p. 90) are used to make him be seen as pathetic rather than totally evil. He begs for forgiveness (p. 90).

The rhetorical technique by which the giant can be seen as an embodiment of abstract selfishness and evil at the beginning and a lonely, loveless old man who can be changed by the love of the child at the end, is really a matter of a shift of emphasis from the negative to the positive qualities which the figure of the giant has potentially. But it also raises a very elegant and ironic point: evil is powerful as long as you give in to it; when you face it it shrinks in stature and power and can be dealt with. The matter is one of perception. Mrs Molesworth presents in 'The Story of Sunny' a stylised representation

of that situation in which the adult appears frightening, but then is seen not to be frightening at all. This is the case in Silas Marner, and also in Great Expectations, in which Pip, at first frightened by Miss Havisham, later penetrates behind appearances and comes to feel affection for her. Mrs Molesworth herself uses this situation realistically in one of her dullest short stories, 'Poor Miss Crawfurd', (The Story of a Spring Morning, 1890), in which Leonora finds that the person she thought a witch is actually a heroine, and grows to love her.

There are other interesting points about the view of childhood exemplified in Sunny. Wordsworth's 'Immortality Ode' was indeed a locus classicus for the whole literature of childhood in the nineteenth century'.[1] Sunny reminds one of Wordsworth's or Vaughan's view of childhood, that drew on something which recalls the Platonic doctrine of reminiscence:

> Not in utter forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God who is our home:
> Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
> Shades of the prison-house begin to close
> Upon the growing boy,
> But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
> He sees it in his joy ....
> ('Immortality Ode')

> Happy those early days! when I
> Shin'd in my angel-infancy.
> Before I understood this place
> Appointed for my second race,
> Or taught my soul to fancy ought
> But a white celestial thought,
> When yet I had not walked above
> A mile, or two, from my first love,
> And looking back (at that short space,)
> Could see a glimpse of his bright-face ....
> (Henry Vaughan, 'The Retreat', 1650)

Sunny too can remember the land whence she came, and heaven does in a sense lie about her in her infancy. She does indeed behold the

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1. Coveney, op.cit., p. 78.

light and whence it flows: she can find flowers and comparatively sunny spots in the forest when the others cannot (p. 79). But though both Wordsworth's and Vaughan's child figures are corrupted by growing up, Sunny seems to be able to withstand corruption:

> "... her poor grandfather and grandmother began to be afraid that the sadness of the forest was at last spoiling her happy nature, and for a while they were very sorry about her."
>
> (p. 80)

> [When she walks through the forest,] "one or two of them shook their heads and said sadly that she was getting to be like the rest of them ...."
>
> (p. 82)

What they see as growing melancholy is only Sunny's solemnity over the magnitude of her task. And since she is not shown as growing to womanhood, the point is left unclear.

Though of course it is clear that Sunny is exceptional — 'she was quite different from the other poor children in the forest' (p. 73) — there are points at which she approaches Mrs Molesworth's 'realistic' model child Griselda. Like Griselda, Sunny is brave (pp. 81, 83), and polite: she curtseys to the giant when she first sees him (p. 85). And there is even one 'realistic' touch, when Sunny, in a manner reminiscent of Griselda, wonders, since the giant does not immediately speak to her, whether

> "... he was deaf and dumb, and if so how could she explain to him what she had come for?"
>
> (p. 85)

Jung said that particular images or 'archetypes' rose to the surface in dreams and the visions of artists to restore the psychic balance, whether of the individual or of the epoch. One such archetype, he said, was the archetype of the child, sharply to be distinguished from representations of 'real' children, 'emphatically not a copy of the empirical child but a symbol clearly recognisable as such'.[1]

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1. Jung, op.cit., p. 161.

Ravenna Helson, in a rather bewildering essay, points out that the nineteenth century seemed to be going through the process of 'individuation', and that various nineteenth century works of children's literature express this in their use of the child archetype, which contrasts with the relative lack of emphasis on the archetype of the child in present-day literature.[1] This is questionable, but Sunny, at least, seems to be compatible with all Jung's criteria for expressions of the child archetype in a way that Griselda and children in Victorian novels generally are not.

Jung said that 'often the [archetypal] child is formed on the Christian model', that it is a 'wonder child', 'divine', representing 'potential future', a 'mediator, bringer of healing, one who makes whole', paradoxically impotent yet powerful, overcoming the monster of darkness, 'bringer of light and enlarger of consciousness', 'the insignificant, dubious beginning, and the triumphal end'.[2] Every one of these characteristics is strikingly applicable to Sunny. In only one point is she at variance with Jung's list of attributes, in that she is not hermaphroditic,[3] but even this point has some relevance to the vision of the child which A Christmas Child conveys, as will presently become clear.[4]

At the third level then, Sunny is the embodiment of the view of childhood as characterised by its power to change the adult; she is in the tradition of the Wordsworthian child figure; and to a very slight degree, she approaches Mrs Molesworth's own view of the 'realistic'

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1. Helson, Ravenna, 'The Psychological Origins of Fantasy for Children in Mid-Victorian England', Children's Literature, Vol. 3, 1974, pp. 74-75, and passim.

2. Jung, op.cit., pp. 159, 161 (164, 165), 164, 164, 166-167 (170 ff.), 167, 169, 179.

3. Ibid., p. 179.

4. The vision of childhood of The Christmas Child is conveyed by the juxtaposition of a female and male child who are scarcely to be distinguished in their attributes; see pp. 259 ff. of this thesis.

model child. Since 'The Story of Sunny' is an allegorical Kunstmärchen, which employs non-realistic characters, she is more a 'figure' than a 'character', and may be seen as a nineteenth century embodiment of the Jungian archetype of the child.

d. Levels of Meaning

'The Story of Sunny' is one of the most singular Kunstmärchen for children in English that I have read. It cannot be fitted into a formula, but is simultaneously an allegory of the relationship between the powerful rich and the powerless poor, an allegory of redemption through self-sacrifice, and a stylised representation of a particular view of childhood. Sunny and the giant can stand for all the things I have mentioned without any contradiction. As Robert Scholes remarks,

> For our reading of multidimensional allegory depends not only on our apprehending all the dimensions of the narrative but also, even mainly, on one being aware of the interaction between them.[1]

Spenser wrote The Faerie Queene, an allegory, because so much better was doctrine by 'ensample' than by 'rule'. It may be said that 'The Story of Sunny' is mawkish or even trivial, but it cannot be said that it preaches. It is genuinely didactic then, for it presents an inexplicit vision of the world in and through the narrative, not by thinly concealed moral tags.

'The Story of Sunny' also demonstrates one of the uses to which fantasy may be put in a work. Talking about 'the fairy story', and citing The Wind in the Willows, C.S. Lewis talked of one aspect of what I have called 'fantasy':

> ... I mean, the presence of beings other than human which yet behave, in varying degrees, humanly — the giants and

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1. Scholes, op.cit., p. 151.

> dwarfs and talking beasts. I believe these to be at least (for they may have many other sources of power and beauty) an admirable hieroglyphic which conveys psychology, types of character, more briefly than novelistic presentation and to readers whom novelistic presentation could not yet reach.[1]

These beings other than human which behave humanly are what I have been referring to as 'fantasy objects'. It would be in order to extend what C.S. Lewis said of fantasy objects to the depiction of the suspension of physical law generally: to say that, in certain works, fantasy objects and events can be used as 'hieroglyphics', convenient and economical vehicles for whatever notions the author wishes to convey. Also, since the 'unfamiliar', not to say the 'improbable' or the 'impossible', has an immediate quality of evoking wonder and holding attention, other things being equal, it may also be said that fantasy in a work may not only be economical and convenient, but also interesting and attractive.

e. Erotic Undertones

I do not mean that 'The Story of Sunny' is a conscious sexual allegory, but a number of elements suggest that it has erotic undertones.

When Sunny goes to meet the giant, she is still a child. But as she walks along, '"she felt as if all of a sudden she had grown almost into a woman ... "' (p. 82). She comes to an overgrown door in a mountain, with a silver knob in it which she has to press to gain admittance (p. 83). She has to go down a dark passage and up a 'very, very high staircase' (p. 84), and then a further 'turny screwy stair' (p. 87) to get to the top of the mountain. Talking about 'The Sleeping Beauty', the psychologist Bruno Bettelheim remarks on the princess having to go up a stair and unlock a key in a door, elements parallel

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1. Lewis, 'On Three Ways of Writing for Children', op.cit., p. 212.

to those in 'The Story of Sunny'. He says that 'in dreams such staircases typically stand for sexual experiences',[1] and that 'turning a key in a lock often symbolises intercourse'.[2] So far, then, it would seem that Sunny's journey to the giant, the journey of a young innocent female child to an old man, stands for or parallels the initiation of the female into sexual experience, or perhaps, more generally, the beginning of erotic awakening.

Her experiences with the giant are also curious. Their meeting is frightening. He

> "suddenly stretchedout his hand to her and made a grab at her hair, screaming out, 'Why you've got sunshine! Come here and let me warm my hands. Ugh! that's the first time I've felt a little less chilly these hundred years,' and Sunny stood patiently beside him and let him stroke her golden hair up and down ...."
>
> (p. 86)

The giant keeps hold of her hair to warm himself (p. 87), and demands this as a service from her (pp. 87-90). At last

> "the giant stroked her warm hair up and down till his poor old hands were quite warm, and he grew quite pleased and good-natured."
>
> (p. 89)

It is a commonplace since Freud, to recognise that playing with hair can stand for the sexual act itself. Bettleheim points out that in the Märchen, 'The Goose Girl', the princess's refusal to let the herdboy take her hair is an attempt to safeguard the 'inviolability of her body'.[3] It takes no very complicated reasoning to work out what exactly Pope was implying when he had the heroine of 'The Rape of the Lock' cry out:

> "Oh, hadst thou, cruel! been content to seize
> Hairs less in sight, or other hairs than these"

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1. Bettelheim, op.cit., p. 232.

2. Ibid., p. 233.

3. Ibid., p. 143.

when a lock of her hair was cut off by her lover. Harry Stone, talking of Dombey and Son, remarks on 'the talismanic hair episode, with its frightening despoliation implications, and its many fairytale and legendary analogues'.[1] Like these, the experience that Sunny has with the giant parallels the sexual experience, if seen from a particular perspective.

Sunny finds it

> "so very tiring to stand such a long time every day while the giant stroked the sunshine out of her golden hair to warm his withered old hands ...."
>
> (p. 90)

and she gets weaker and weaker till she nearly dies. The Victorians thought that 'As a general rule a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband, but only to please him',[2] and the notion of the debilitiating effects of sexual experience was a commonplace. This simple view of the imagery is in keeping with the Freudian approach.

'The Story of Sunny' may be seen as parallel to such Märchen as 'Beauty and the Beast' or 'Riquet with the Tuft' in that, like them, it deals with the coming to terms of a young girl with a male who at first seems unattractive and frightening, and then appears to be warm and kind. Ultimately, the giant ceases to trouble Sunny and protects her from too great a heat (p. 92).

Peter Brooks has suggested that since, from the point of view of the author, children's literature was by definition pure, morally uplifting and innocent (because its audience was assumed to be so) it supplied for Victorian and Edwardian writers a means for the maximum

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1. Stone, Harry, 'The Novel as Fairy Tale: Dickens' Dombey and Son', English Studies, Vol. 47, 1966, p. 20.

2. Acton, The Function and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs, 1857, quoted by Maureen Duffy, The Erotic World of Faerie, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1972, p. 291.

liberation of their unconscious psychological preoccupations and repressions.[1]

Brigid Peppin looks at the reader, and suggests that one of the possible reasons for the revived interest in Märchen in the late nineteenth century

> may have been the powerful sexual metaphors which permeate the imagery: the doe-princess being pierced by the prince's arrow, the frog-prince's restoration to manhood by a kiss, and so on. These fantasies could be enjoyed unself-consciously by a generation that had not yet been alerted to sexual symbolism by the discoveries of Sigmund Freud.[2]

However, determined 'psychological' critics can find sexual undertones anywhere. Maureen Duffy finds, 'by the usual transposition',[3] pubic hair in 'Bluebeard', 'The Goose Girl', 'Goblin Market' and Puck of Pook's Hill,[4] in what appears to be a particularly undiscriminating way. I do not wish to reduce literary criticism of children's literature to the level of a game of 'Let's see what we can get out of a simple child's story'.

No doubt Mrs Molesworth and the adults who bought A Christmas Child would have repudiated the undeniably reductionist analysis above, an analysis that I too find suspiciously 'slick'. Nevertheless, I do think that there are undeniable erotic overtones in 'The Story of Sunny'. They add to the 'meanings' in the narrative, as part of the larger re-establishing of relations based on the Christian myth, as I indicated earlier.

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1. Brooks, Peter, 'Toward Supreme Fictions', Yale French Studies, No. 43, 1969, pp. 10-11.

2. Peppin, Brigid, Fantasy Book Illustration 1860-1920, Studio Vista, London, 1975, p. 18.

3. Duffy, op.cit., p. 290.

4. Ibid., pp. 273, 276, 290, and passim.

C. NARRATIVE ART

a. Tale and Frame: the uses of fiction

'The Story of Sunny' is a narrative interpolated into the novel, A Christmas Child. Marghanita Laski says:

> Another fault very noticeable [in Carrots] and in many of [Mrs Molesworth's] other books is the breaking of the narrative by the interpolated story .... Interpolated stories were, of course, an accepted convention at that time — one remembers the Mouse's Tale in Alice — and narratives were constantly being held up by the insertion of a sub-title reading "The Nurse's Tale" or "The Peasant Woman's Story" or some such. It is not, however, a device used by the best writers. It is needed even less by a writer of children's stories who always could, one feels, use the interpolated section in yet another book of short tales.[1]

In their very different ways Dickens and George MacDonald use the interpolated story, and one would imagine that both were to be classed as 'best writers'. I would suggest that, at its best, Mrs Molesworth's use of the convention is part of her narrative art, that the complex relation and interaction of the interpolated tale and its contextual frame, far from 'holding up' the narrative, enhances the total work.

In 'The Groaning Clock', one of Mrs Molesworth's fantasy novelettes for children, there is an interpolated Kunstmärchen called 'The Fairy Godmothers' which, like 'The Story of Sunny', is said to derive from a German source. As it ends,

> "It's a little muddling," said Rosamond reflectively. "A sort of mixture of real and fairy."
>
> "That's not muddling," exclaimed Louis, more eagerly than was usual with him. "That's what makes it realer. It's stupid of you to say that, Ros, when you —" but here he stopped short, though his glance at his sister finished the sentence. "He means," she said to herself, "how fairy things are mixed up with real things about our clock." But aloud she only replied, "Yes, I see how you mean."[2]

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1. Laski, op.cit., p. 64.

2. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, Fairies — of Sorts, Macmillan, London, 1908, p. 133.

This extract indicates two ways in which interpolations, whether Kunstmärchen, fantasy short stories or short stories, interact with the material into which they are interpolated. With Mrs Molesworth the long framing narratives are invariably 'realistic' fiction. 'The Fairy Godmothers' is not merely 'real' in that it contains 'realistic' material incongruously juxtaposed with traditional Märchen motifs in the manner of the burlesque Kunstmärchen, but it also affects the lives of its "realistic" fictive listeners in some way. It is calculated to bring Louis and Rosamond to a greater awareness of their own situation, which in this case is that an element of fantasy analogous to such an element in the Kunstmärchen has entered their lives, for the basic idea of 'The Groaning Clock' is a rehash of The Cuckoo Clock. Again, the interpolation often acts as a counterpoint to the theme of the larger realistic fiction itself. In this case, the moral point of the Kunstmärchen — the uses of childish good temper and unselfishness — is the same as one of the moral points made by 'The Groaning Clock' itself. Hence, the tale affects the lives of the listeners in the fictive frame, and acts as a thematic counterpoint to it.

The frame of 'The Story of Sunny', A Christmas Child, is unique in all Mrs Molesworth's work. It is a novel about the life of a boy, 'Ted', but a virtual biography of one Thomas Grindal Hutton (26 December 1862 - 21 December 1875), who died at the age of 13. Mrs Molesworth was a family friend of the Huttons, perhaps through knowing Mrs Hutton's brother, Thomas Edwin Jevons, Professor of Political Economy at Manchester in 1866.[1] The Huttons lived at Ludlow, and Mrs Molesworth stayed with them at some time between 1871 and 1875. It is possible

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1. See Green, B.H.M., op.cit., pp. 42-43. In a letter dated April 1978, Ruth Robertson tells me that there is one factual mistake in B.H.M., that it was not William Stanley, but Thomas Edwin Jevons who was Professor at Manchester.

that the Huttons's Georgian house was the inspiration behind the old house of The Cuckoo Clock, which is dedicated to the memory of Thomas Hutton and to his sister Mary Josephine. A Christmas Child appears to have been more or less a joint effort, involving a good deal of re-writing, of Mrs Hutton and Mrs Molesworth, to immortalise Thomas's memory. Mrs Molesworth makes it quite clear that this book is out of the ordinary:

> I blame myself a little for not having told you more plainly at the beginning that it was not a regular "story" I had to tell you in the "carrots" coloured book this year, but just some parts, simple and real, of a child-life that I love to think of.
>
> (p. 209)

'The Story of Sunny' and its framing material about the life of Ted take up about one fifth of the book, beginning from the middle of Chapter III, till the first few pages of Chapter VI. In this portion Ted meets Mr Brand, who is 'very fond of children, but he did not know much about them' (p. 50). 'He was very tall and very big. Whether he quite came up to Ted's idea of a "diant" I cannot tell. But queer fancies began to chase each other round the boy's brain' (p. 50). Mr Brand, amused by Ted's expression, proposes jokingly to take Ted up to the top of a nearby mountain, and leave him there with a jug of water and some food. He forgets that 'what to him was a mere passing joke, might be very different to the tender little four-years-old boy' (p. 52). Ted is frightened, and slips away (p. 56), but does not tell his mother his fears because he thinks she likes Mr Brand (p. 57). His mother notices Ted's strange attitude to Mr Brand (p. 58), and what looks like his fear of the mountain. His mother asks Percy, Ted's cousin, though she knows that Percy would not frighten him deliberately, whether any game or story about mountains has frightened Ted (p. 59). Percy denies this, and they resolve to keep quiet and not bother Ted (p. 60). Ted's family take him on a picnic and Percy mentions casually the story

of a boy stolen by fairies to Mabel, another cousin (p. 66). Ted's fear of giants, of Mr Brand and of being forced to live on a mountain alone come to the fore in a half-articulate manner (p. 67), and Percy feels sure that Mr Brand has something to do with Ted's fear (p. 67). But Mabel, who does not know the background, and likes mountains, begins to tell 'The Story of Sunny' (pp. 67-69). Ted, hoping it is not frightening, cuddles close to Mabel at the mention of the evil giants (pp. 69, 71). As the Kunstmärchen continues Ted begins to talk jauntily about seeing the nearby mountain with the old giant's head poking out, and so 'evidently the child's fear of the mountain was becoming a thing of the past, and Percy felt quite pleased' (p. 78). And as it ends,

> "I were just sinking," said Ted, "what a silly boy Ted were to be afraid of mountains — Ted would like to to go up to the very, very top," he went on valorously. "Ted wouldn't mind a bit — not," with a prudent reservation, "not if thoo and Mabel was wif me."
>
> (p. 93)

The narrative voice comments on Ted's renewed fondness for the mountain (p. 95), and, very credibly, on his continued avoidance of Mr Brand (p. 94), and occasionally refers back to this episode in his life in the rest of the book (pp. 105, 119).

Mrs Molesworth's particular method of child characterisation is here apparent: the child is different in kind from adults, has limited information about the world around it, and low emotional reserves: Ted does not understand Mr Brand, and is easily frightened. Her particular emphasis on the incommunicability of children's fears is apparent: Ted does not explain the matter to his mother till he is of an age to be able to (pp. 57, 94). But her psychological realism, which rings very true in this case, is the clearsighted awareness that children's fears can be allayed by reproducing them and presenting a solution to them in stylised or symbolic form. The narrative voice makes it quite clear

that 'It was a good deal thanks to Mabel's story that he grew to like his old friend the mountain again' (p. 95).

Hence, one of the aspects of realistic frame and stylised tale is apparent: the latter is of psychological use to the lives of its fictive listeners in the former. Sunny in the tale sees the giant as smaller than she expected, and Ted outside the tale sees that his fear of Mr Brand and the mountain is groundless. Tale and frame together make the point about frightening things having power only in the perception.

It is a commonplace today that Märchen are in some way of use to the child in its psychological growth. In 1942 Kate Friedlaender said that 'the fairy-tale's particular solutions for [its] conflicts appear to be a means for alleviating anxiety in the child',[1] and in 1976 Bruno Bettelheim made very much the same point in a long study.[2] I have never seen it remarked that writers for children in the Victorian period itself appear to have come to a similar conclusion.

Mrs Molesworth's psychological insight into the use of the Kunstmärchen is part of her larger child psychology. In her fantasy novels such as The Cuckoo Clock the deprived children work out their deprivations and find solace in phantasy. In a novel such as Little Miss Peggy, she showed that for a child, the imaginative use of isolated elements from Märchen, not necessarily a complete formed narrative, could serve a purpose similar to that of 'The Story of Sunny' for Ted. Peggy is lonely, and takes solace in 'fancying' that fairies live in a white cottage she can see from her window. She tells her mother, who is a little troubled at what seems to her morbidity, and

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1. Friedlaender, Kate, 'Children's Books and their Function in Latency and Prepuberty', American Imago, Vol. 3, 1942, p. 129.

2. Bettelheim, op.cit., pp. 5, 7, 25, passim.

replies that Peggy must remember that there are no fairies, and that she must not let her fancies run away with her, that fairies really only live in Peggy's head. Then —

> "Mamma, mamma," Peggy interrupted, putting her fingers in her ears as she spoke, "I won't listen. You mustn't, mustn't say that. I must have my fairies, mamma. I've no sisters."[1]

This is much more sophisticated than The Cuckoo Clock. The child here knows that her fantasy objects, derived from the Märchen, have no reality other than an imaginative one. She also knows that they serve a psychological purpose.

In all these cases Mrs Molesworth showed her awareness of the psychological power of symbols — symbols in dream-phantasies in The Cuckoo Clock, symbols derived from the Märchen in Little Miss Peggy, and symbolic narrative in 'The Story of Sunny', where 'real' mountains and giants are exorcised by symbolic ones being overcome.

It also appears that Mrs Molesworth did not necessarily consider only symbolic or stylised narrative fiction like the Kunstmärchen as psychologically useful for the child. Many of her non-fantasy interpolated narratives appear to fulfil much the same function for their fictive listeners as 'The Story of Sunny' does for Ted. For instance, at the end of Carrots, Carrots and Floss are staying with their aunt when news arrives that their mother is ill, perhaps dying. So their aunt tells them 'The Two Funny Little Trots'. These were identical twins, whom she met and loved. Because of a series of misunderstandings she thought that one twin had died and left the other quite desolate. Later, when she saw the pair together she thought that one had returned from the dead, and of course it transpired that it had not died at all.

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1. Molesworth, Mary Louisa, Little Miss Peggy (1887), Macmillan, London, 1893, pp. 51-52.

As the narrative ends, news arrives that the mother of Carrots and Floss has not died, but is on the mend. Again, in 'The Mysterious Guide', the children are worried when their father is late returning home during a London fog. Their grandfather tells them of how he was led home during just such a fog by a mysterious guide, a blind man. As the story ends, the father arrives. Both these, like 'The Story of Sunny', serve to lessen tension during a period of strain.

Consideration of one aspect of the relationship between frame and tale has led to a larger awareness of Mrs Molesworth's psychological insight, as shown not just in her use of stylised Kunstmärchen, but in her use of fiction generally. Perhaps, just as her fictive listeners are succoured by narratives, she envisaged her real audience, the children for whom she wrote, being in some way succoured as well as taught, by the works in which those narratives appear.

b. Tale and Frame: the model child authenticated

Interpolated German Kunstmärchen often presented 'in a frankly poetic and mythical form the point offered more or less realistically in the full story. The Märchen was thus a microcosm within a macrocosm'.[1] In Novalis's Henry of Ofterdingen, for instance, the two interpolated Kunstmärchen (or fantasy short stories) of Arion and Atlantis take up the theme of the larger narrative, the growth of a poet. I think that 'The Story of Sunny' operates in this way as well. Walter Crane, who was very interested in making text and illustrations a unified whole, put as the frontispiece to the book an illustration entitled 'The Story of Sunny', depicting Ted and Percy listening to Mabel. I think this indicates that Crane realised the central thematic importance of

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1. Bleiler, op.cit., p. xx.

'The Story of Sunny' to A Christmas Child.

In the terms of Scholes and Kellog's The Nature of Narrative, Sunny is an 'illustrative' figure, presenting an aspect of reality, while Ted is a 'representational' characterisation, seeking to convey the illusion of a complete portrait.[1] But all Mrs Molesworth's fictional portraits were 'slanted' to a didactic end, and Ted, just as much as Griselda, is a model child.[2] The narrative voice indicates as much when it says

> But I am forgetting a little, I think, that I am going to tell about a child to children ...,
>
> (p. 2)

or

> ... I have tried to write in such a way that his happy life and nature should be loved by other children ....
>
> (p. 209)

However, A Christmas Child differs in one important respect from The Cuckoo Clock in that the model it presents is clearly non-secular.[3] In fact, the book is not so much fictionalised biography as hagiography, with the inevitable tendency away from representational characterisation to its illustrative equivalent. With regard to the theme of the model child, 'The Story of Sunny' then, takes up and echoes the theme of the model child, in a stylised manner.

The connection between Ted and Sunny is made during the course of the Kunstmärchen, when a ray of sunshine falls on Ted's head and '"There's Sunny kissing Ted too," he said merrily' (p. 75). But in

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1. Scholes, Robert, and Robert Kellog, The Nature of Narrative, O.U.P., New York, 1966, p. 84.

2. There is a good deal more of Mrs Molesworth's overt 'advice to parents' in A Christmas Child, than in The Cuckoo Clock. See the sections in which the narrative voice speaks directly on the subject (pp. 23, 118, 132, etc.) and the sections in which the methods of Ted's mother are held up as exemplary (pp. 41, 104, 115, 171, 199 etc.).

3. See Avery, Nineteenth Century Children, op.cit., pp. 162-163, on the comparatively secular nature of Mrs Molesworth's fictive world.

the frame too, there are a number of points at which Ted seems parallel to Sunny.

As Sunny defended the poor, Ted too is the friend of the poor around him: the cook and the gardener, and Jamie the cottage boy whom he helps. He feels uncomfortable to see the servants sitting separately at prayers, and sits with them (p. 137).

More importantly, as Sunny is a type of Christ, so is Ted, in a number of ways. The first chapter begins with an epigraph from At the Back of the North Wind, and this is an important pointer, for Diamond, 'God's baby', whose earthly parents are called Mary and Joseph, is a type of Christ as well. He too dies young. There are recurrent references to Ted being a 'Christmas child' through the book (pp. 3, 96-97, 123, 160, 223), and the importance of the song 'Home Sweet Home' (pp. 77, 152, 214) seems to be loaded with some symbolic meaning. Almost every chapter, except those concerned with Sunny, has an account of Ted's growing spiritual awareness and relationship with God (pp. 32, 43, 44-46, 99, 117, 121, 201-202, 222). At one point his desire to be like Jesus is remarked upon (pp. 138-140), at another his lack of fear of death, secure in the knowledge of God's goodness (p. 181). Like Sunny's, his self-sacrificing and protective qualities are made clear (pp. 9, 96). His all-encompassing love, particularly for his mother and sister, qualities of the secular model child as well, are the subject of many episodes (pp. 8-9, 12-13, 28, 181, 196, 207; 96-98). His death is foreshadowed from the beginning (pp. 3-5), he knows he is going to die, and as the narrative voice assures us, this is not sad in any way (pp. 209, 215-223). He chooses a white cross for his grave, and, finally, 'it was with Christmas roses that the grave of our Christmas child was decked' (p. 223).

Mrs Molesworth faces squarely the matter of whether or not Ted's Christ-like quality in any way rendered him effeminate. When he fights

with his best friend Rex, and they make up, they kiss each other. Ted anxiously asks his mother whether this was unmanly, and his mother says that kindness and goodness can never be unmanly (p. 178). It is clear that Mrs Molesworth recognised that the Christ-like child was bound to be considered girlish by certain standards, and considered this girlishness as positive rather than otherwise.

Just as Sunny can remember the land from which she came, the narrative voice fancies that Ted too looks as if he knows a good deal about the sky, which he gazes at as a baby (p. 5). The same Wordsworthian note is struck in both cases.

The narrative of Ted's life is located in a particular time and place, the story of Sunny is not. The latter acts as a universalised abstract of the former, and Ted and Sunny, representational character and illustrative figure, together produce a composite picture of the model child. Frame and tale work together.

'The Story of Sunny' is also one of a number of authenticating devices, by which Mrs Molesworth seeks to establish Ted as a 'real' child. Precisely because Sunny, a flat figure, appearing in a stylised genre, is juxtaposed against Ted, purportedly a 'rounded' child in a realistic genre, he is made to seem more 'true to life' than perhaps he would have been otherwise.

A consideration of the thematic relation of the Kunstmärchen to the novel has revealed Mrs Molesworth's presentation of yet another model child. Like Griselda, he is the repository of many virtues: he learns obedience, but not of an unquestioning nature (pp. 39 ff., 103 ff., 139 ff.), he is cheerful, contented, unselfish, balanced, independent, and resourceful. The book consists of a series of episodes to illustrate his growing experiences: how he cuts himself with a pair of scissors (Ch. II), nearly scalds his hands (Ch. V), learns about

money and payment (Ch. VI), sets up a museum in the house (Ch. X), and so on. Apart from the device of contrasting genres, Mrs Molesworth attempts to authenticate the model child in a number of other ways: baby-talk, which presumably seemed authentic at the time, though Roger Lancelyn Green says that it dates the book;[1] physical plainness (p. 97); 'manly' qualities such as prowess at cricket, football and skating (pp. 160, 210); and the avoidance of improbable incident, in keeping with the decorum of realistic fiction. Ted rescues no drowning babies, converts no old men, performs no prodigies.

Roger Lancelyn Green says that A Christmas Child must be counted as one of the most successful pieces of children's fiction which ends with the death of a child protagonist, but adds that it 'cannot now be recommended as a story for children'.[2] It is unfortunate also that the only still-surviving contemporary reaction to it should be an extremely negative one: an essay by the American humorist Clarence Day, later included in his famous Life With Mother (1937). Day's account of A Christmas Child is extremely amusing: he read it as a child in the 80's, and mocks Ted as an ideal that could not be lived up to but deserved a 'wary respect'; regards the baby-talk as unreadable; makes much of Ted's effeminacy; points out the 'archness' of the narrative voice; and says of his 'depressing' death:

> I didn't like books with unhappy endings, but I didn't mind this one. It seemed sad, in a way, and yet suitable. I regarded it with much the same feelings that I later regarded Greek tragedies. The Olympian deities in their hate stacked the cards against Oedipus, and Jehovah and Mrs Molesworth did the same thing to Ted, out of love. It was a comfort to feel that Heaven neither loved nor hated me yet, and I earnestly hoped that it never would.[3]

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1. Green, 'Mrs Molesworth', op.cit., p. 106. See also p. 132 of this thesis.

2. Green, B.H.M., op.cit., p. 42.

3. Day, Clarence, 'Noble Boys' (1936, in the Saturday Review of Literature), in Life With Mother (1937), collected in The Best of Clarence Day, Alfred A Knopf, New York, 1956, p. 257.

Day points out the weaknesses of Mrs Molesworth's presentation of the model child, but for the record, it should be remarked that in order to make out a more damning case he distorts the book very seriously. He misascribes descriptions, cites portions in the wrong contexts, makes many factual errors. Ted's prowess at many games is mentioned in the same section of the book, but Day seizes upon the mention of croquet to make his point, and leaves out the others. This is typical of his method.

Fashions in fictional children and models of childhood have changed since the 1880's. It is no longer as permissible to mention God or death, much less a Christian God or a pious death, in a work for children. My point is that, whether what Mrs Molesworth was doing is acceptable or not to a contemporary, she did it with skill, and that part of this skill is her juxtaposition of genres to authenticate her presentation of a model child.

c. Tale and Frame: style

George MacDonald framed The Princess and the Goblin with a dialogue in which a little girl interjects and asks the 'Mr Author' about the tale which he is telling. But like most framed Kunstmärchen, or framed narratives generally, The Princess and the Goblin is self-contained, that is, there are no interjections as it proceeds. 'The Story of Sunny' is very singular in that the realistic frame material obtrudes into the Kunstmärchen at every step and cannot be ignored. Indeed, Mabel begins 'The Story of Sunny' about two-thirds of the way through Chapter IV of A Christmas Child, when the grown-ups of a picnic party have left the children by themselves. When she has described the charcoal burners, the giant, and Sunny's birth and unique nature, that is, when the expository part of the Kunstmärchen is over, there is a sharp break. The grown-ups return, and shy Mabel cannot continue before them, but promises to do so later. Chapter V continues with the

picnic party, and Mabel singing 'Home, Sweet Home', bringing tears to the eyes of all. Then follows a short description of the garden at Ted's home, and Mabel continues with the Kunstmärchen from the point at which Sunny makes her decision to go to the giant. This long obtrusion of the frame material consists of slightly more than three pages, dividing 'The Story of Sunny' into two parts, and having it recede into the background for some time.

Other obtrusions of the frame into the tale consist mainly of the 'realistic' questions and comments of Mabel's listeners, Percy and Ted, her replies and own occasional comments, and an occasional comment by the narrative voice of A Christmas Child.

The colloquial questions, answers and comments on the Kunstmärchen, made by its fictive teller and listeners, provide an account of naïve reactions and emphasise its nature: that it is stylised fiction, not pseudo-history, and that it leaves things unaccounted for which would immediately strike one in real life or in realistic fiction. Hence, when Mabel says the charcoal burners could get no sun in the forest, and that the mountain blocked their way to the sun,

> "What was there at the other side of the forest?" said Percy; "couldn't they have got into the sunshine at that side?"
>
> "No," said Mabel. "I think there was a river or something. Or else it was that the forest was so very, very big that it would have been quite a journey to get out at any other side. I think that was it. Any way they couldn't."
>
> (p. 70)

In the same way, Mabel forestalls such a 'realistic' reaction, by saying, when the giant opens the way through the mountain, that Sunny

> "... knew it would be all right, for once the giant had agreed to open it, he couldn't shut it again — that was settled somehow, some magic way I suppose, the story didn't say how."
>
> (pp. 88-89)

In the same way, the interjections can help the narrative along, as when

Ted asks why the giant shut up the mountain in the first place (p. 72), whether or not Sunny went to the giant all alone (p. 81), and whether she was afraid of bears in the forest (p. 83), Percy asks whether the people heard any more of the giant after his metamorphosis (p. 91) and all their questions are answered.

The interjections also make explicit to the reader what is implicit in the Kunstmärchen: that the giant is a '"nasty diant"' as Ted says (p. 72), or that Sunny's grandparents were very kind (p. 81), or as Percy says, that '"It is a very pretty story"' (p. 92).

At one point, Ted's interjection juxtaposes 'real life' and Kunstmärchen in a very interesting way. When Mabel describes the shining knob in the mountain,

> "... bright and shining as if it had been cleaned every day always."
>
> "Wif plate-powder," said Ted, who was very learned about such matters, as he was very fond of watching the servants at their work.
>
> "Yes," said Mabel, "just as if it had been cleaned with plate-powder."
>
> (p. 83)

At two others, the narrative voice describes his reactions. When Mabel says she will tell a story about a giant and a mountain,

> Ted drew nearer to Mabel, and nestled in to her side.
>
> (p. 69)

Again,

> "But the mountain belonged to a great and very powerful giant" — at this Ted edged still closer to Mabel — "who lived in it quite alone."
>
> (p. 71)

These obtrusions of the frame material upon the Kunstmärchen have a dual effect. The reader is kept in mind of two genres of narrative fiction at once, two kinds of narrative worlds, the realistic and the stylised. The down-to-earth interjections of Mabel's listeners, who know that they are listening to a 'story' yet ask naïve questions about how it works, lend credence to their characterisation as 'realistic'

children, and verisimilitude to their world, since in comparison to Sunny they are 'round' characters, and their environment is described more realistically, with more detail. Simultaneously, however, it is as if the boundaries between the frame and tale, realistic novel world and stylised Kunstmärchen world, dissolve or break down, as happens, not without irony, when the plate-powder of the one finds a place in the other. Frame and tale mingle, and are ultimately inseparable, which adds a depth to A Christmas Child which it otherwise would not have had.

But since after all 'The Story of Sunny' does belong to a different genre from the rest of A Christmas Child, Mrs Molesworth puts what may be described as an 'atmospheric cocoon' round it, in various distinct ways.

The narrative voice distances 'The Story of Sunny' from the main narrative of Ted by making a point about the unfamiliarity of the setting in which the Kunstmärchen is told. The setting and situation are unfamiliar and romantic. The Kunstmärchen is told during the course of a picnic; 'a gipsy tea' (p. 63), itself a deviation from the course of daily life, and in 'a lonely little nesty place in the gorge between the mountains that I have told you of' (p. 61). The narrative voice waxes eloquent for over two and a half pages about the natural beauties of the gorge: the river, the footpath, the glade, the flowers. It explicitly states that 'It was a lovely dream of fairyland' (p. 64), and in a manner reminiscent of Phil of The Cuckoo Clock, Ted

> would not leave the least shred of paper or even crumbs about, for the fairies would be angry, he said, if their pretty house wasn't left "kite tidy". And Percy and Mabel were amused at his fancy, and naturally enough it set them talking about fairies and such like.
>
> (p. 65)

Further talk about fairies follows (pp. 65-67), and it is as if the

narrative voice has prepared the way for this, and by a natural progression, for the Kunstmärchen which follows.

Mabel, who tells 'The Story of Sunny', refers back to an 'authority',

> "Sometimes in our German reading-books there are funny little bits of stories, and I add on to them. There was one — oh yes, I'll tell you one about a giant who lived on the top of a mountain."
>
> (p. 68)

This very medieval narrative device works together with the device of interpolation as part of a rhetoric suggesting a quality of mystery, an infinite regression of time and space. Even within the novel, 'The Story of Sunny' is a Kunstmärchen, made up of Mabel's elaborations upon the motifs she found in her German reader. Yet precisely because the origins of the Kunstmärchen are said to go back beyond and before Mabel, a quality of antiquity and mystery, very appropriate to a work of fantasy, are vouchsafed to it. In addition, of course, the character of Mabel is thus given credence, since it seems more likely that a young girl would retell a story in such a situation, rather than produce a perfectly formed narrative on the spur of the moment.

Mrs Molesworth has her realistic characters resort to this appeal to authority again and again, when interpolated narratives appear in her work. The best example of this, perhaps, is Grandmother Dear (1878) where the histories of the interpolated stories are given in minute detail.

Mabel is made to add this appropriate quality of antiquity and mystery to 'The Story of Sunny' by certain touches of description. For example, her account of the overgrown mountain door and the clean silver knob serves not only to bring in Ted's naïve remark about the plate-powder, but also to create a feeling of strangeness by holding together in unnatural suspension two opposite concepts. The same effect is created by her account of the time-scheme of the Kunstmärchen.

There are three stages within it: the long-ago when the charcoal burners had access to the sunshine, the duration of the narrative while Sunny undergoes her ordeal, and the time immediately after, when the mountain and giant disappear. At the end,

> "And though it is a very, very long time since all that happened, it has never been quite forgotten ...."
> (p. 92)

All the long-ago's are pushed even further into the past, appropriately enough.

Again, it should be noticed that Mabel, in telling a Kunstmärchen, is employing the same rhetorical device as the narrative voice of A Christmas Child, a novel, which begins with the words 'Christmas week a good many years ago' (p. 1). Even as they are distanced from each other, novel frame and Kunstmärchen tale seem to move towards each other in some way.

There is only one point at which Mabel seems to work against the atmosphere of strangeness that she is creating, when Sunny enters the giant's chamber and his lips move soundlessly. He says

> "'I sent my voice downstairs to speak to you, and he has been loitering on the way, lazy fellow, all this time. There are no good servants to be had nowadays, none. I've not had one worth his salt since I sent my old ones back to Ogreland when they got past work.'"
> (p. 86)

This sophisticated, amusing touch for a moment aligns this Kunstmärchen with the burlesque Kunstmärchen, which mocks Märchen motifs. The traditional frightening giant is burlesqued here very much in the manner of Andrew Lang's The Princess Nobody (1884) or Prince Prigio (1889) where similar burlesque giants appear. This burlesque touch of course is part of the point of the Kunstmärchen, that evil is only frightening when one is frightened of it, that the giant's frightening qualities are in the minds of the charcoal burners. Burlesque is used by Mabel to divest evil of its power, to reduce the giant to the

level of a crotchety old lady grumbling about servants.

It is apparent from the above that with an interpolated narrative, there is a variation on the model of author, narrative voice, implicit audience and real reader. The interpolated narrative adds a fictive character talking to a fictive audience in addition, and is hence more mediated than the novel.

Occasionally, the narrative voice of the interpolated narrative differs sharply from that of the narrative voice of the frame in Mrs Molesworth's work. In Carrots, for instance, Carrots's sister Cecil reads aloud the fantasy short story (called a 'fairy tale'), 'The Bewitched Tongue', from the old book Faults Corrected. 'The Bewitched Tongue' is in the style of the old Georgian books for children, formal, leisurely, full of abstract words and balanced, rounded clauses. Faults Corrected may well be a real book, though I have been unable to trace it, and in any event the contrast between the style of its narrative voice, the auntly narrative voice of the frame, and the occasional colloquial interjections of the fictive listeners is very striking. In general, however, in Mrs Molesworth's work, the fictive tellers of interpolated narratives sound like the narrative voices of the novels in which they appear.

Such is the case with 'The Story of Sunny'. Mabel's verbal mannerisms are almost exactly the same as those of the narrative voice of A Christmas Child. Hers too, is an auntly narrative voice, even to the invitation to her audience to participate in the naming of a character, which occurred in The Cuckoo Clock.

> "I don't know what her real name was; the story didn't tell, but the name she got to have among the forest people was Sunshine — at least it was Sunshine in German, but I think 'Sunny' is a nicer name, don't you?"
>
> "Yes," said Percy; and
>
> "Ses," said Ted, "'Sunny' is nicest."
>
> "Well, we'll call her 'Sunny'."
>
> (pp. 73-74)

Here are the same nursery adjectives that characterise the auntly narrative voice: 'lots and lots' (p. 69), 'very, very big' (p. 70), 'so awfully' (pp. 70, 85); the occasional italicisation of words; the occasional rhetorical question (pp. 69, 78); and the same use of occupatio (p. 88).

Though of course the style of this narrative voice, both inside and outside the Kunstmärchen, is far more personal than that of the Märchen which is not 'auntly' in any way, on the whole it is analogous to the Märchen in that it too is a plain style, using simple words and colloquialisms, and divested of all extraneous descriptions or detail. Even in their printed forms, Märchen tend to retain something of the vigour of oral narration about them, unless they have been severely distorted; by its use of the auntly narrative voice, this Kunstmärchen also attempts to convey the illusion of oral narration, albeit of a different kind. On the whole, I think it succeeds.

d. Kunstmärchen Compared: 'The Story of Sunny' and 'The Selfish Giant'

Oscar Wilde's 'The Selfish Giant' was published eight years after A Christmas Child, in the collection The Happy Prince and Other Stories (1888). Both Wilde and Mrs Molesworth found the same basic narrative a suitable vehicle for what they wanted to say, though of course Wilde did not take advantage of the opportunities offered by the device of interpolation. I do not suggest that Wilde plagiarised from Mrs Molesworth. Contrasting the two Kunstmärchen will, however, illuminate the distinctive qualities of 'The Story of Sunny'.

The points both Kunstmärchen have in common are numerous. In both, a group (the forest people in 'Sunny'; the children in 'The Selfish Giant') enjoy the benefits of a pastoral open-air environment (the sunny area on the other side of the mountain; a garden); they

are excluded from it by a barrier (the blocked-up mountain door; a wall) erected by a giant who is legally within his rights in doing so. As a result the group suffers in ugly surroundings (the forest; a stony dusty road) which are not conducive to social intercourse (play is impossible in both cases). The giant too is deprived of those benefits which he denied the group (sunshine; enjoyment of the spring in the garden); he suffers from perpetual cold over a long period of time. His selfishness is broken down by an apparently helpless child (Sunny; a little boy) and the barrier between the group and the pastoral environment is removed. The child who is responsible is not as other children (Sunny is unusually merry; the other children do not know who the little boy is); it dies and yet is not dead (Sunny awakes as if from a dream; the little boy reappears after being crucified); and the giant leaves the earth (he is metamorphosed into a cloud; he dies and is taken to Paradise).

Wilde shifts the focus of his Kunstmärchen from the child to the giant. Wilde's Son, Vyvyan Holland, says that 'The Selfish Giant'

> reveals that side of Wilde's mind which led him to write The Soul of Man Under Socialism. Although very far from being a socialist in the modern meaning of the word, he did undoubtedly feel that there were certain glaring injustices and irregularities in the social system that might well be reformed.[1]

Like Mrs Molesworth's giant, Wilde's giant obviously stands for the capitalist. The power of both to exclude other people rests on the unquestionedly sacrosanct nature of property and legal ownership — the signpost which Wilde's giant puts up is in conventional legal terminology. However, Wilde's giant could as easily stand for a spoilt child:

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1. Holland, Vyvyan, 'Once Upon a Time ... A Critical Note', in The Happy Prince: The Complete Fairy Stories of Oscar Wilde (1888 and 1891), Duckworth, London, 1952, p. 200. All page references in the text of this section of this chapter are from 'The Selfish Giant' as printed in this edition.

> "My own garden is my own garden," said the Giant; "anyone can understand that, and I will allow nobody to play in it but myself."
>
> ("SG" p. 31)

'The Story of Sunny' is an allegory of the Christian myth, but 'The Selfish Giant' is more limited, though it draws upon the same myth. His Kunstmärchen is marked not by religious feeling, but by religiosity. Wilde's little boy is neither a straightforward picture of the Christ of the gospels, nor a type of Christ like Sunny, but something in between: a sentimentalised version of the Christ Child. Christ died for his people, Sunny virtually dies for hers, but the little boy does not die for the giant, but saves him by playing on his sympathies:

> He was so small that he could not reach up to the branches of the tree, and he was wandering all around it, crying bitterly.
>
> ("SG" p. 33)

The Christ Child with whom we are here presented has none of Sunny's positive qualities. Though Mrs Molesworth made her Saviour-figure female, since goodness and compassion were thought to be feminine qualities and signs of weakness in men, and Wilde's Saviour is a boy, it is the girl who acts. The boy is merely acted upon. His death and resurrection are merely decorative elements which take place offstage and are not integral to the story. When he appears at the end with the marks of nails on his hands and feet and talks to the giant in words which are meant to remind us of Christ's words to the repentant thief on the cross beside him, it is not the central fact of Christ's death and resurrection upon which Wilde is concentrating. His suffering is merely another chance for Wilde's giant to respond in his role as penitent:

> "Who hath dared to wound thee?" cried the Giant; "tell me, that I may take by big sword and slay him."
>
> "Nay!" answered the child: "but these are the wounds of Love."
>
> "Who art thou?" said the Giant ....
>
> "You let me play once in your garden, to-day you shall come with me to my garden, which is Paradise."
>
> ("SG" pp. 36-37)

This is a prettified account, for it was the grown Christ who died with nails through his hands and feet, not the Christ Child. By presenting the risen Christ as a helpless child, inviting a stock response of pathos, I think that Wilde is taking away some of the dignity of the Saviour, and emasculating the God who was made Man.

Since Sunny is not explicitly Christ, the reader need not seek for constant correspondences between her nature and actions and Christ's. But Wilde's little boy is explicitly Christ and to distort the nature of Christ as Wilde does is to take away some of the imaginative power of the Christian myth, so that the Kunstmärchen loses in power what it gains in pathos.

Wilde's giant does not know that the little boy whom he entertains is the Christ Child. He responds to weakness, and is amply rewarded. Hence, 'The Selfish Giant' is not so much an allegory of the Christian myth of redemption by divine sacrifice, as an illustration of the text 'Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto me'. As such, it is more limited than 'The Story of Sunny'.

In 'The Story of Sunny', the giant ages while he is cold and loveless. But the Selfish Giant is not really identified with age, for he ages after his mellowing, not while he is suffering the literal cold of winter and the metaphorical cold of lovelessness. Hence, it cannot be said that Wilde presents the mellowing influence of childhood innocence on frozen age as Mrs Molesworth does. In this respect too, I think that 'The Selfish Giant' is more limited than 'The Story of Sunny'. This, though the metaphorical connection between the children and the youth of the year is well indicated; it is they who bring the spring into the winter garden.

The sharpest dissimilarity between 'The Selfish Giant' and 'The Story of Sunny', however, lies in their respective narrative stances. Wilde referred to his 'fairy tales' as 'studies in prose, put for

Romance's sake into a fanciful form ...',[1] and Walter Pater wrote to him, saying that he admired 'the beauty and tenderness of "The Selfish Giant"' as 'perfect in its kind', praising also the 'genuine "little poems in prose"', that is the occasional descriptions, as 'gems'.[2] Wilde's aim, then, was to write 'prose-poems'.

Hence the style of 'The Selfish Giant' is marked by precious descriptions, laden with adjectives and points of detail:

> It was a large lovely garden with soft, green grass. Here and there over the grass stood beautiful flowers like stars, and there were twelve peach-trees that in the spring-time broke out into delicate blossoms of pink and pearl, and in the autumn bore rich fruit.
>
> ("SG" p. 30)

Certain set-pieces, such as the description of the Snow, Frost, Hail and North Wind disporting themselves ("SG" pp. 31-32) are effective, but tend to hold up the narrative.

Certain jokes smack of the study, seem to be part of a shared condescension on the part of adults who can appreciate an irony which children cannot:

> He had been to visit his friend the Cornish ogre, and had stayed with him for seven years. After the seven years were over he had said all that he had to say, for his conversation was limited ....
>
> ("SG" p. 30)

The quasi-Authorised Version diction at the end is somewhat mawkish, and is in keeping with what seems to me to be a toying with the idea of death. On one level, Wilde affirms the happiness of the redeemed giant in Paradise, but simultaneously undercuts it in his affirmation that the way to that happiness is death. In contrast, the ending of 'The Story of Sunny' is an affirmation of life: Sunny does not die, the

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1. Wilde, Letters, op.cit., p. 219.

2. Pater, Walter, in Oscar Wilde: The Critical Heritage, ed. Karl Beckson, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1970, p. 60.

forest people become healthy and energetic, and the giant is transformed. Wilde's giant does die, in the odour of sanctity, and no amount of talk about the gardens of Paradise can disguise a rather self-indulgent morbidity and melancholy.

Wilde knew that he was writing prose-poems, marked by a certain languidness, but his comments indicate a genuine uncertainty about the nature of his intended audience behind a deliberate affectation. He said variously that his 'fairy tales' were 'really meant for children',[1] were 'meant partly for children and partly for those who have kept the child-like faculties of wonder and joy',[2] were 'written not for children, but for child-like people from eighteen to eighty',[3] and that he 'had about as much intention of pleasing the British child as [he] had of pleasing the British public'.[4]

All Wilde's contemporary critics were not Philistines, and there was a consensus of opinion about his fairy tales. All the reviewers remarked upon his prose, the occasional touch of 'sham sentiment', the 'ultra aestheticism', the 'fleshly style', the 'straining for effect' and the long catalogues of 'aesthetic upholstery and bric-à-brac'.[5] They noticed too, that the audience of the 'fairy tales' 'will assuredly not be composed of children',[6] that their 'diction seems to us hardly suitable to children',[7] that

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1. Wilde, Letters, op.cit., p. 218.
2. Ibid., p. 219.
3. Ibid., p. 237.
4. Ibid., pp. 301-302.
5. See Beckson, op.cit., pp. 60-62, 113-118.
6. Ibid., p. 61.
7. Ibid., p. 114.

> it is, perhaps, as well that [they were] not meant for the "British Child"; for [they] would certainly make him scream, according to his disposition, with terror or amusement.[1]

In the twentieth century, the same point is made by Geoffrey Willans and Ronald Searle, who make their anti-hero, who is ironically enough called Molesworth, present a picture of a sentimental parent determinedly trying to read 'The Happy Prince' to his bored son, emphasising its moral qualities, its 'beautiful' prose, and its melancholy.[2]

My point is not that Wilde's critics, then and now, mistook Wilde's intention and criticised his 'fairy tales' for not being what they were not intended to be: Kunstmärchen for children written in a difficult style. Rather, I suggest, as Willans and Searle seem to indicate, a basic flaw in all Wilde's 'fairy tales', including 'The Selfish Giant'. Wilde seems to be luxuriating in sentimentality and nostalgia, in much the same way as J.M. Barrie in Peter Pan. The style of 'The Selfish Giant' creates an impression not so much of a sophistication which children cannot fully appreciate, as of a conscious adult self-indulgence in such 'childish' paraphernalia as the Kunstmärchen, generally considered to be a genre suitable for children, provides. It is 'arch', therefore, in the negative sense, but not quite in the same manner as the bad auntly narrative voice. That condescends to its audience, this condescends to its genre and subject-matter.

In contrast, Mrs Molesworth was quite clear about her intended audience, and the reason she was writing for it. As a result, her prose style — pared, plain, down-to-earth, with no set-pieces to clog the flow of the narrative — does not make the reader squirm, whether he be child or adult.

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1. Ibid., p. 118.

2. Willans, Geoffrey and Ronald Searle, Down With Skool!, Max Parish, London, 1953, pp. 90-91.

On the whole then, I think that Wilde's famous Kunstmärchen, along the same lines as Mrs Molesworth's, is more limited in its treatment and cloying in its style. I think also that Mrs Molesworth's Kunstmärchen, whose merits are illuminated by contrasting the two, is one of the best pieces she ever wrote. It is a pity that it should be forgotten today.

CONCLUSION

... serious discussion of children's literature is still often impeded by a popular view that it consists of the adventures of Lenny Lamp and Clarence Clock.

G.W. Turner, Stylistics

[Fantasy] ... is a difficult thing because you get so tangled up. If you move one physical element or one physical law you upset the whole lot. The world only just holds together anyway.

'A discussion with William Mayne', 1970

... I embarked on a course of Mrs Molesworth, the leading writer of stories for children. They lasted me many years, and I think, on re-reading them now, that they are very good. Of course children would find them old-fashioned nowadays, but they tell a good story and there is a lot of characterisation in them .... I can still re-read The Cuckoo Clock and The Tapestry Room.

Agatha Christie, An Autobiography

In the Introduction to this thesis I said that in discussing works of children's literature, I would use the same range of critical tools as would be employed in discussing any narrative fiction of merit. Here, these have proved to be, inter alia, identification of relevant conventions and modes in a particular work, the author's individual method of employing them, analysis of characterisation and isolation of various aspects of narrative art such as narrative voice and levels of allegory. The application of this method has implications which extend to children's literature, 'fantasy' and most important, to Mrs Molesworth.

I. CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Children's literature seems to be worth taking seriously, since these examples have repaid analysis in depth and at length without revealing themselves to be trivial; the art that goes into their creation is not different in kind from that employed in 'adult' literature. In an interesting article Mary Warnock said that adults reading work written for children could result in a certain irreversible laziness

> which makes the spectacle of the student reading E. Nesbit so alarming. For after all if they are imaginatively lazy, who shall save the world?[1]

I disagree, and hope that this thesis demonstrates that just as the serious reading of children's literature is not necessarily a 'cop-out', critical examination of it need not be an 'easy option' either. Everything depends on how much is in the work and on how much

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1. Warnock, Mary, 'Escape into Childhood', New Society, Vol. 17, No. 450, 13 Mar. 1971, p. 823.

discrimination the reader or critic brings to it.

In 1963, F.C. Crews's The Pooh Perplex,[1] in the line of Graham Greene's rather tongue-in-cheek essay on 'Beatrix Potter' (1933),[2] did the serious literary analysis of children's literature a grave potential disservice. He took A.A. Milne's work as his vehicle in a parody of various schools of literary criticism, and this implied not only that all critical schools had their flaws, but that any serious critical approach to children's literature was by definition absurd. This attitude seems to me to be mistaken, and I think that the apologetic or coy note that is found in so much of so-called 'critical' discussion of children's literature is unwarranted, when both the works discussed and the method of discussion are of any worth at all.

II. 'FANTASY'

The element in a narrative fiction which I have called 'fantasy' seems to lend itself to a variety of purposes. When two works of fantasy were analysed in this thesis the first proved to employ fantasy objects and events as an important part of a realistic psychological exploration of childhood deprivation, and the second to employ fantasy objects and events as a way of condensing various levels of meaning in a stylised, non-realistic, allegorical work.

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1. Crews, Frederick C., The Pooh Perplex: A Freshman Casebook, Dutton, New York, 1963.

2. Greene, Graham, 'Beatrix Potter' (1933), Collected Essays, Bodley Head, London, 1969, pp. 232-240.

III. MRS MOLESWORTH

All Mrs Molesworth's work was drawn upon in a discussion of two works of fantasy.

The Cuckoo Clock, in my opinion the best and most representative of Mrs Molesworth's fantasy novels, which embodies her 'fantasy formula' (fantasy as phantasy), seems to have been the first work of 'introvert fantasy' for children. Composed of various elements which Molesworth found to hand, it has influenced at least two generally esteemed twentieth-century fantasy writers for children, by their own admission. The book also embodies Mrs Molesworth's stated intention to give child readers a suitable vision of childhood. I hope to have shown that her characterisation of a 'model' child, neither too good for credibility nor too bad to be exemplary, is handled with skill and tact. Mrs Molesworth also used such techniques as I have isolated with consummate art, as I have tried to demonstrate in particular by my analysis of the auntly narrative voice.

The extent of Mrs Molesworth's abilities as a writer are further revealed by 'The Story of Sunny', written in a strikingly different genre. I consider 'The Story of Sunny' to be the best of her many Kunstmärchen. The multi-levelled allegory never detracts from the simple appeal of the narrative, and Mrs Molesworth skillfully uses the interpolated story to make a point about child psychology, and as another means of conveying her vision of the model child.

The fact that Mrs Molesworth was a hack, which itself would imply that the majority of her works were ephemeral, leads historians of children's literature to make such assertions as:

> ... no one could make out any case for her being a very influential or original writer (as distinguished from a very pleasant one).[1]

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1. Avery, Gillian, in a letter to me dated January 1978.

I contend, on the contrary, that not only is the best of Mrs Molesworth's work important in the tradition of children's literature, but that it is as rewarding to analyse as it is pleasant to read.

APPENDIX I

A CRITICAL HISTORY OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND MRS MOLESWORTH

A Critical History of Children's Literature ed. by Cornelia Meigs is the only work of its kind, and a standard reference tool. The revised edition (Macmillan, New York, and Collier-Macmillan, London, 1969) corrects many of the errors that were pointed out in the first edition, but certain errors still remain in the portion on Mrs Molesworth, which indicate that the book as a whole should still be used with great caution by the student, as most of the facts are difficult to verify.

There is a serious bibliographical error in the entry (p. 174)

> Molesworth, Mary. "One Generation Passeth." Blackwood's Magazine, London, Vol. 262 (July, 1947), pp. 22-36

which should read

> G.K.M. '"One Generation Passeth Away ...,"' Blackwood's Magazine, London, Vol. 262 (July, 1947), pp. 22-36

and which includes a stirring account of a shipwreck by G.K.M.'s grandmother, a Mary Molesworth, but which has nothing to do with the Mrs Molesworth in question, who was born nine years after the account was written.

There are errors of fact in such statements as (p. 173)

> But after her first book for children appeared, Tell Me a Story (1875), illustrated by Walter Crane and containing "Adventures of Herr Baby", "Little Miss Peggy", and "Nurse Heatherdale's Story", her books, with two or three exceptions, were all for children.

The three items mentioned as short stories are in fact full-length novels, published in 1881, 1887 and 1891 respectively. The summaries of Mrs Molesworth's novels Us and The Cuckoo Clock (pp. 173-4), moreover, are gravely inaccurate.

Mrs Molesworth's position is erroneously interpreted. She is characterised as 'a purveyor of magic' in the chapter heading (p. 165),

which is seriously misleading, since only about one tenth of her work was fantasy, the bulk of her output being realistic short stories and novels.

These and other shortcomings need to be corrected in any future editions of A Critical History of Children's Literature, if the value which the book undoubtedly possesses is not to remain seriously impaired.

APPENDIX II

MRS MOLESWORTH ON B.B.C. RADIO AND TELEVISION

Date:	Book:	Dramatised by:	Programme:
Radio:			
23. 3.50	Scenes from The Tapestry Room	——	English for Undergraduates
4.12.53, 11.12.53, 18.12.53	The Tapestry Room ('Dudu', 'Dudu in Tapestry Land', 'Au Revoir to Dudu')	Alice de Grey	Children's Hour
27.4.55, 4.5.55, 11.5.55	Peterkin ('The Parrot', 'Margaret', 'No Mystery at All')	——	Children's Hour
11.7.55, 18.7.55, 25.7.55	The Children of the Castle ('The Castle', 'Bertram Arrives', 'The Magic Island')	Alice de Grey	Children's Hour
20.10.55	The Red Grange	Marion MacWilliam	Children's Hour
3.3.56	The Cuckoo Clock (excerpt)	Marion MacWilliam	Children's Hour
3.4.58	The Tapestry Room	Marion MacWilliam	Children's Hour
28.4.59, 5.5.59, 12.5.59	'The Summer Princess' (3 parts)	Elizabeth Taylor	Schools Programme
27.4.59, 4.5.59 11.5.59, 18.5.59; 5.9.60, 12.9.60, 19.9.60, 26.9.60	The Carved Lions ('Coming Events', 'Gathering Clouds', 'A New World', 'Good News')	Alice de Grey	Children's Hour

Television:

The poem 'A Race' was part of the programme 'Play School' on B.B.C. Television four times in 1969, and Chapter 1 of 'The Cuckoo Clock' was part of the programme 'Jackanory' on 25.10.71 and 10.9.73.

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2. Richard Holt Hutton's Reviews in The Spectator

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